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BENGALURU
BJP members representing Bengaluru alleged corruption in approving building plans, issuance of e-khatas, construction of retaining walls along storm-water drains, and property tax collection by civic bodies under GBA. » PAGE 6

Govt. plans new Excise Act to curb illegal liquor sale

BENGALURU
The government is considering revising the Karnataka Excise Act, 1965, and introducing a new law to curb the illegal sale of liquor. » PAGE 6

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Afghanistan says Pakistani attack in Kabul killed 400

Bodies recovered from Kabul hospital as conflict between neighbours escalates; Islamabad rejects charge of targeting the hospital, and dismisses claims of hundreds of casualties as 'propaganda'

Associated Press
KABUL

Rescuers recovered more bodies from the rubble of a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul on Tuesday after officials said an overnight airstrike killed more than 400 people, in a dramatic escalation of a conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan that is now in its third week.

Pakistan rejected Afghanistan's accusation that it targeted the hospital, insisting its strikes, which were also conducted in eastern Afghanistan on Monday, were aimed at military facilities. It dismissed Afghanistan's claims of hundreds of casualties as propaganda. Crowds gathered to search for their loved ones among the injured and the dead. It was not possible to independently confirm the toll.

The conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan has seen repeated cross-border clashes as well as airstrikes inside Afghanistan. International calls for a ceasefire have gone unheeded.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of providing safe haven for militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan, especially for the Pakistani Taliban. The group is separate but closely allied with the Afghan Taliban who took over Afghanistan in 2021 in the wake of the chaotic withdrawal of U.S.-led troops. Kabul denies the charge.

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Taliban security personnel inspecting the site on Tuesday after Pakistani airstrikes hit a drug rehab centre in Kabul. AFP

Pakistani attack on Kabul hospital 'barbaric': India

NEW DELHI
India "unequivocally" condemned Pakistan's bombing of a hospital in Kabul, terming it "unconscionable" and "barbaric". "This heinous act of aggression by Pakistan is also a blatant assault on Afghanistan's sovereignty and a direct threat to regional peace and stability," the MEA said on Tuesday. » PAGE 10

Iran's security chief Ali Larijani killed in strike, claims Israel

Stanly Johny

Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and one of the most influential men in the post-Khamenei Iran, was assassinated in an overnight air strike, the Israeli military and Defence Minister Israel Katz claimed on Tuesday.

"Throughout the years, Larijani was considered one of the most veteran and senior figures within the Iranian regime leadership, and was a close associate of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei," the Israel Defence Forces said in a statement. During the January protests against the Iranian government, "Larijani personally oversaw the massacre that was carried out against Iranian protestors," it added.

The Iranian government has neither confirmed nor rejected Israel's claim.

Ali Larijani

After Ali Khamenei was killed on February 28 by a joint Israel-American strike, Larijani had emerged as a defiant public face of the Iranian state. He ruled out talks with the U.S. and vowed to "burn the hearts of the enemies" in the early days of the war.

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Rains in city, heavy hailstorm in some parts of Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

While Bengalureans enjoyed their showers on Tuesday, which brought temperatures down, hailstorms took residents in some other parts of Karnataka by surprise.

IMD officials said that Bengaluru will continue to receive light rainfall in the next two to three days.

On Tuesday evening, people in Dharwad district were in panic for a while because hailstones covered farmland, roads, open spaces and rooftops, making them appear as if covered by snow. In south Karnataka similar scenes were witnessed in parts of Hassan district on Monday, when heavy hailstorm had turned streets white.

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INTERVIEW

Ramit Tandon

All our scheduling is going to revolve around peaking for the Asian Games

From training bases in the United States to competing at home in Mumbai, Tandon is balancing preparation and performance. The Indian men's No. 2 shares insights on life on tour and discusses his Asian Games ambitions, the depth in Indian squash, and the challenge of breaking into the world's elite

K. Keerthivasan

After a frustrating build-up to the 2022 Asian Games that ultimately cost him a place in the Indian team, Ramit Tandon has quietly rebuilt his rhythm and belief. Now ranked World No. 37 and coming off a strong start to the season, the 34-year-old is looking ahead with renewed clarity – targeting a return to the Asian Games stage and a deeper push on the PSA Tour.

On the eve of the JSW Indian Open in Mumbai, where he is seeded third, Tandon spoke to *The Hindu* about form, fitness, the evolving Indian squash landscape, and the road to a crucial year for the sport. Excerpts:

Your best result playing at home was reaching the semifinals at the CCI International, a PSA World Tour silver event, in 2019. Going into the the JSW Indian Open, how are you feeling?

It's always wonderful playing at home. The issue is we don't get to do it as frequently, but obviously with squash making it to the [2028 Los Angeles] Olympics, we are seeing a big boost. A couple of months ago, there was a massive event in Indore as well, at Daly College. Last year, the JSW Indian Open was the first glasscourt event after a gap of a few years. I think post COVID, Indore tournament was the first time they (organisers) hosted an event. And now it's a yearly affair. It's always a good feeling to play in front of people who have supported you through your career, those familiar faces and of course, the home support. It's hard to beat that.

At the Indian Open, you will be the third seed, behind Abhay Singh (second) and Egypt's Yahya Elnawasany. What are your expectations?

Being the third seed, obviously, I would like to do well at the event. And I would love to hopefully go back home with the trophy. At the same time, you also have to take it one step at a time and be patient. It's important not to get carried away with rankings. They are just a number. Anyone can beat anyone as there are a lot of upsets happening in the PSA Tour worldwide. My approach will be to enjoy my week in Mumbai and play my best squash.

You have spent much part of your time competing in USA training and sparring with top players...

I train with former World No. 1 David Palmer, who is now based in Utica in upstate New York. Then apart from that, when the season starts, there's not much training that we can do as you don't get much time since we are competing every other week. At that point in time, it just becomes a question of putting yourself in areas where there are enough players where you can continuously get sparring practice. So, a good chunk of my time has been in the USA. I am already in India (Kolkata now) getting used to the weather here, because it's very different from the winters in America. I'm trying to get used to the climate here.

Tell us about the Indian squash landscape as far as the men are concerned?

I think Indian men's squash is obviously at a very strong point. I can't remember the last time we had four players ranked in the world's top 50. We have been a dominant force. Back in the day, there was always Saurav Ghosal, who was extremely good. He was in the top 10 (in 2019), but he didn't have a backup. The other players back then were probably outside the 50s, 60s in the world. And the way squash is these days, it's like there's a difference in ranking, but there's not much of a difference in level.

For example, when you're saying someone is in the top 30, top 40, or top 50 in the world, it's not surprising if you see them beat those in the top 20 or top 10. From a perspective of where we can go as a nation, I believe there is a lot of scope and potential for Indian squash on the men's side in the way it has shown itself as a unit and as a team. Having said that, it's also pressure to get it right. I feel like as a country, we need to take the right steps to make sure we groom the players in the right way so that they break into the world's top 10 and come back with medals from the world championship and other big events.

> I think Indian men's squash is obviously at a very strong point. I can't remember the last time we had four players ranked in the world's top 50. We have been a dominant force. Back in the day, there was always Saurav Ghosal, who was extremely good. He was in the top 10 (in 2019), but he didn't have a backup

Do you think that is possible?

We are not in England, France, or Egypt where we have world champions in the past. No one has done it. It's a bit of unknown territory for us. But with the support of corporates and with squash being added to TOPS scheme, I'm sure we can put together a plan that will see us maximise our potential.

With the Asian Games coming up this year, how keen are you to be part of the Indian men's team?

Asian Games is the biggest event for us this year. India has always been a strong contender at the Asian Games. As the defending champion in men's team, we would be keen to do well. All our scheduling is going to revolve around how to peak for the Asian Games. I am excited and looking forward to it. The last Asian Games in 2022 was a little tricky. I had a few injuries leading up to the Games and a few issues with rankings and selection policies and a bit of back injury that kind of ruled me out of the Games eventually. Of course, stakes are high because the Olympic qualification is on line the singles (men and women) winner will qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

At the moment, you are ranked 37 in the world. How difficult is it to maintain the ranking for you to be in the team at this stage for the Asian Games?

I don't know what the selection format or the policies are for this year's Asian Games. As of today, I would say the four boys in the world's top 50 in the world should be the ones at the Asian Games.

> There's nothing easy when it comes to playing the Olympics. When you look at the world rankings changing every week, it gives every player a lot of opportunities to move up the rankings. Apart from that, there's going to be the Asian qualification, which is the Asian Games. Then, there's going to be an eventual world qualification, which would be after removing all the players who have qualified

Will there be a selection trials for the Asian Games?

We have received information on selection trials and training camp for the Indian team in Chennai in June. But there's still no clarity on the exact process that will be followed.

Squash is making its debut at the 2028 Olympics. Who do you think will make the cut for it?

It's the Olympics. It's supposed to be difficult, right? There's nothing easy when it comes to playing the Olympics. When you look at the world rankings changing every week, it gives every player a lot of opportunities to move up the rankings. Apart from that, there's going to be the Asian qualification, which is the Asian Games. Then, there's going to be an eventual world qualification, which would be after removing all the players who have qualified. As of now, anyone, for me, in the top 50 in the world stands a chance to make the cut for the Olympics.

Having said that, the nature of our sport with injuries and with how the game is structured, even the best player in the world today might lose his/her spot at the Olympics.

You did pretty well to reach the quarterfinals of the Motor City Open. How are you feeling heading into the Indian Open?

I'm happy with the level I'm playing. The Motor City Open was a good run for me. And I'm looking forward to this patch of events because I haven't played this season. After Motor City, I was supposed to play in the Texas Open, but I fell sick and I haven't competed in any event since. I'm looking forward to the Indian Open, following which that I have a packed calendar.

Do you think India should host more big events?

We are definitely seeing an increase in the number of PSA events in our country. I think we should consider hosting one or two major events every year. I do understand the requirement of smaller events as well because there are a lot of other players who are not in world's top 50, who need that support to climb up in the rankings. Perhaps, a blend of maybe three events a year, a PSA Copper, Bronze, and above [Gold and Platinum] level will really benefit the higher ranked players. At least, India is bringing the world circuit and, the challenge for me and the other players in the country is to go deep in bigger tournaments.

Anahat Singh is the toast of nation as far as squash is concerned. How do you see the 17-year-old's meteoric rise?

Anahat has been exceptional. I think what she's achieved in general is exceptional for her age. If you look at Anahat's ranking a year ago (WR 62) and you look at where she's today (WR 20), it's a massive, massive difference. If she just continues the way she's doing, I hope she can break a lot more records.

As LPG shortage hits kitchens, veggie prices crash ahead of Ugadi

Traders say that while supply remains high, many restaurants and street-side eateries, key consumers of vegetables such as cauliflower, capsicum, potato and tomato, have reduced purchases or temporarily shut operations

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Driving a surge in festive activities owing to Ugadi, vegetable prices across Bengaluru have unexpectedly dropped, as the ongoing LPG crisis continues to disrupt demand from bulk buyers such as small eateries and roadside food outlets.

Traders say that while supply remains high, many restaurants and street-side eateries, key consumers of vegetables such as cauliflower, capsicum, potato and tomato, have either reduced purchases or temporarily shut operations due to cooking constraints. This has led to excess supply in the markets during what is typically a peak festive period. As a result, prices have fallen sharply.

Cauliflower is being sold for as low as ₹12, while capsicum prices have dropped by nearly 40%. "Supply is high, but the buyers have reduced. Small eateries have stopped purchasing over the last three to four days, so we are forced to lower prices," said Iqbal Hussain, a vendor in Yeshwanthpur. Traders added that vegetables commonly used in bulk by eateries, especially for dishes like gobi manchurian and other Chinese items, have been hit the hardest.

Traders say that vegetables commonly used in bulk by eateries, especially for dishes like gobi manchurian and other Chinese items, have been hit the hardest. FILE PHOTO

An official representing a hypermarket chain, however, said the fall in vegetable prices is largely driven by high supply and increased arrivals, with LPG crisis not largely contributing. "The disruption linked to cylinder availability would account for barely 5% of the price drop," he said, adding that arrivals have gone up significantly with both Ugadi and Ramzan around the corner, leading to a temporary glut in the market.

For leafy vegetables, however, prices have increased despite lower demand, as these items cannot be stored for long, especially during the summer, vendors say. "We are already facing losses due to reduced sales. Leafy greens cannot be stored, so the only way to recover some of the cost is to increase prices," said Mahalakshmi, a vendor at K.R. Market.

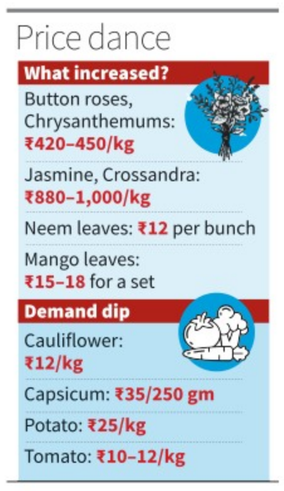
Flower prices surge

However, in contrast to vegetables, flower prices have surged significantly ahead of the festival. Button roses and chrysanthemums are currently being sold at ₹420 to ₹450 per kg, while jasmine and crossandra have touched ₹880 to ₹1,000 per kg across key markets such as City Market, Malleswaram, Hebbal, and Yeshwanthpur.

Traders attribute the spike not just to festive demand, but also to the steady decline in cultivation. "Flower production in areas around Bengaluru has dropped by nearly 30% over the past two years. So, even with normal demand, prices are rising," Selvan Joseph, a vendor, said.

Festival-specific items such as neem and mango leaves have also become slightly costlier.

Widely used during Ugadi celebrations, neem leaves are now priced at around ₹12 per bunch, while mango leaves are being sold at ₹15 to ₹18 for a set, an increase of ₹3 to ₹5 across markets.



Cauliflower is being sold for as low as ₹12 while capsicum prices have dropped by nearly 40%

No disruption for holige

Despite the broader disruption caused by the LPG shortage, Ugadi-special food preparations have largely remained unaffected. Many eateries said traditional items like holige are usually prepared using woodfire, leaving them unaffected by LPG dependency.

Smaller establishments, meanwhile, said they source holige from home-based producers, allowing them to continue orders without disruption.

Many hotel owners in areas like Malleshwaram and Jayanagar also said that they have neither cut down on festive menus nor increased prices for Ugadi meals, even as the LPG shortage continues to strain regular operations.

HC seeks stock of commercial LPG as govt. restricts supply to only 1,000 cylinders for hotels per day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Tuesday directed the State and Union governments to provide details of stocks of commercial Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders, while adjourning the next hearing to March 23 on a petition seeking uninterrupted supply of LPG to restaurants in Bengaluru city.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum passed the order on the petition filed by Bangalore Hotels' Association, which has sought the court's intervention on the issue of drastic reduction in commercial LPG cylinder supply which has threatened to shut down hundreds of eateries, both small and big.

Meanwhile, an advocate representing the Union government told the court that a petition seeking the court's intervention before the Bombay High Court was disposed of by recording the statement made by the Solicitor General of India, who had requested a Division Bench of the Bombay High Court to leave the issue to be addressed by the Union and State governments based on the current geopolitical issue in West Asia.

However, appearing for the petitioner, advocate Satish K. pointed out that as per the records of the State, an average 44,000 commercial LPG cylinders were being distributed daily across the State before the crisis began.

The Bangalore Hotels' Association has sought the High Court's intervention on the issue of drastic reduction in commercial LPG cylinder supplies. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Only 1,000 cylinders

Now, the State government, through its order issued on March 16 citing various communications from the Centre, has directed the three Oil Marketing Companies to restrict the supply of commercial LPG cylinders to only 7,000 per day, of which only 1,000 cylinders have been earmarked for restaurants, dhabas, hotels and industrial canteens, which is less than 5% of regular requirement, the petition stated.

Mr. Satish further pointed out that there are about 40,000 hotels in Bengaluru alone employing over six lakh persons, and closure of hotels would impact their livelihoods.

Meanwhile, the petition also noted that the Union government in its Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026, notified on March 9, has ordered that "all City Gas Distribution (CGD) entities shall ensure that industrial and commercial consumers supplied through their networks receive 80% of their past six month average gas consumption subject to operational availability."

The petitioner-association cautioned of a catastrophic impact on the perishable goods supply chain as Bengaluru's hotels consume an estimated 12 lakh litres of milk daily, alongside vast quantities of meat, vegetables, and fruits, all of which now face a total loss of demand if all the restaurants are closed due to non-supply of LPG.

Mangaluru unlikely to get LPG shipment immediately; tanker *Shivalik* to sail to Dahej instead

Sources in the New Mangalore Port Authority have confirmed that Shivalik, which was scheduled to reach Mangaluru on Wednesday, is unlikely to arrive. FILE PHOTO

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

LPG Tanker *Shivalik*, which discharged 20,000 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) at Mundra Port in Gujarat on Tuesday, is unlikely to sail to Mangaluru to discharge the remaining 26,000 tonnes of LPG as announced earlier.

Instead, the tanker is expected to sail to Dahej Terminal (Adani Petronet Port Ltd.) in the Gulf of Khambhat, South of Mundra, and in Bharuch district of Gujarat, to discharge the balance 26,000 tonnes of LPG, multiple sources in the maritime sector told *The Hindu*.

After discharging LPG at Mundra, *Shivalik* sailed out around 3 p.m. and is expected to reach Kandla Port for bunkering (fuelling) around 11 p.m. on Tuesday. From there, it is expected to sail to Dahej, sources said.

Sources in the New Mangalore Port Authority confirmed that *Shivalik*, which was scheduled to reach Mangaluru on Wednesday, was unlikely to arrive.

Reports also said another LPG Tanker, *Nandadevi*, with 46,500 tonnes of LPG, arrived at Vadinar (Jamnagar) Port, which is also in Gujarat, on Tuesday and began ship-to-ship transfer of LPG.

Another consignment

Another independent consignment of about 30,000 LPG was expected to arrive at New Mangalore Port on March 29, sources said. The consignment originates from the U.S. for Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL).

HPCL has an LPG Import Facility in Mangaluru from where the imported gas is pumped towards Bengaluru and Mysuru through the Mangaluru-Bengaluru/ Mysuru LPG Pipeline.

Crude import normal

Sources in the NMPA stated that the import of crude for Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd. (MRPL) has been normal. The port receives an average of three very large crude carriers (VLCC) and about 10 vessels with 80,000-1,00,000 tonnes capacity a month.

Two each crude carriers, from Russia and Saudi Arabia respectively, are expected to reach the port this month.

India Post launches 24-hour and 48-hour speed post services

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India Post has introduced a new premium 24-hour and 48-hour Speed Post service, which was launched in Bengaluru on Tuesday by Chief Postmaster General of Karnataka Postal Circle K. Prakash.

The new premium services are designed to offer urgent and guaranteed delivery solutions to both retail and bulk customers. The 24-hour Speed Post service guarantees next-day delivery (D+1) between identified metro city pairs Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. For now, this service will be available at 42 post offices in Bengaluru.

The 48-hour Speed Post service guarantees delivery within two days (D+2) between the six metro cities Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. This service will be available at all post offices of the city.

These services will offer customers top priority handling at every stage of booking, processing and delivery, full postage refund in case of delay, OTP-based delivery confirmation provided as a bundled service with no additional charges, the India Post said.

Head constable saves bike taxi rider from ending his life

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Head Constable Sridhar Murthy found the man lying on the track after having allegedly consumed alcohol; he quickly pulled him to safety

A 38-year-old bike taxi rider was rescued from an alleged attempt to end his life on a railway track under the jurisdiction of Yelahanka Police Station in the North-East Division, thanks to the swift response of a police constable on patrol duty on Sunday evening.

According to the police, the Police Control Room received an alert that a man was lying on a railway track and attempting to end his life. Head Constable Sridhar Murthy, who was on Cheetah vehicle patrol, rushed to the spot.

Mr. Murthy found the man lying on the track after having allegedly consumed alcohol. He quickly pulled him to safety.

Loan burden

Preliminary inquiry identified the victim as a bike taxi rider. The police said he had taken a business loan of ₹28 lakh four years ago but suffered heavy losses. With accumulated interest, the debt had reportedly ballooned to nearly ₹1 crore. Unable to repay the amount, he had been allegedly facing harassment from money lenders.

Distressed by financial pressure and after being separated from his wife and son, he allegedly decided to take the extreme step.

As part of his plan, the man consumed alcohol and lay on the railway track, waiting for a train. A vigilant resident from a nearby apartment noticed the situation, recorded a video, and alerted the emergency helpline 112.

Counselling received

Following the rescue, Mr. Murthy counselled the bike taxi rider, assuring him that suicide is not a solution and offering guidance and support. He later contacted the victim's family and safely handed him over to his brother.

The police said the man later called the head constable to thank him for saving his life.

(If you are in distress or having suicidal tendencies, please reach out to these 24/7 helplines: KIRAN at 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104 for help.)

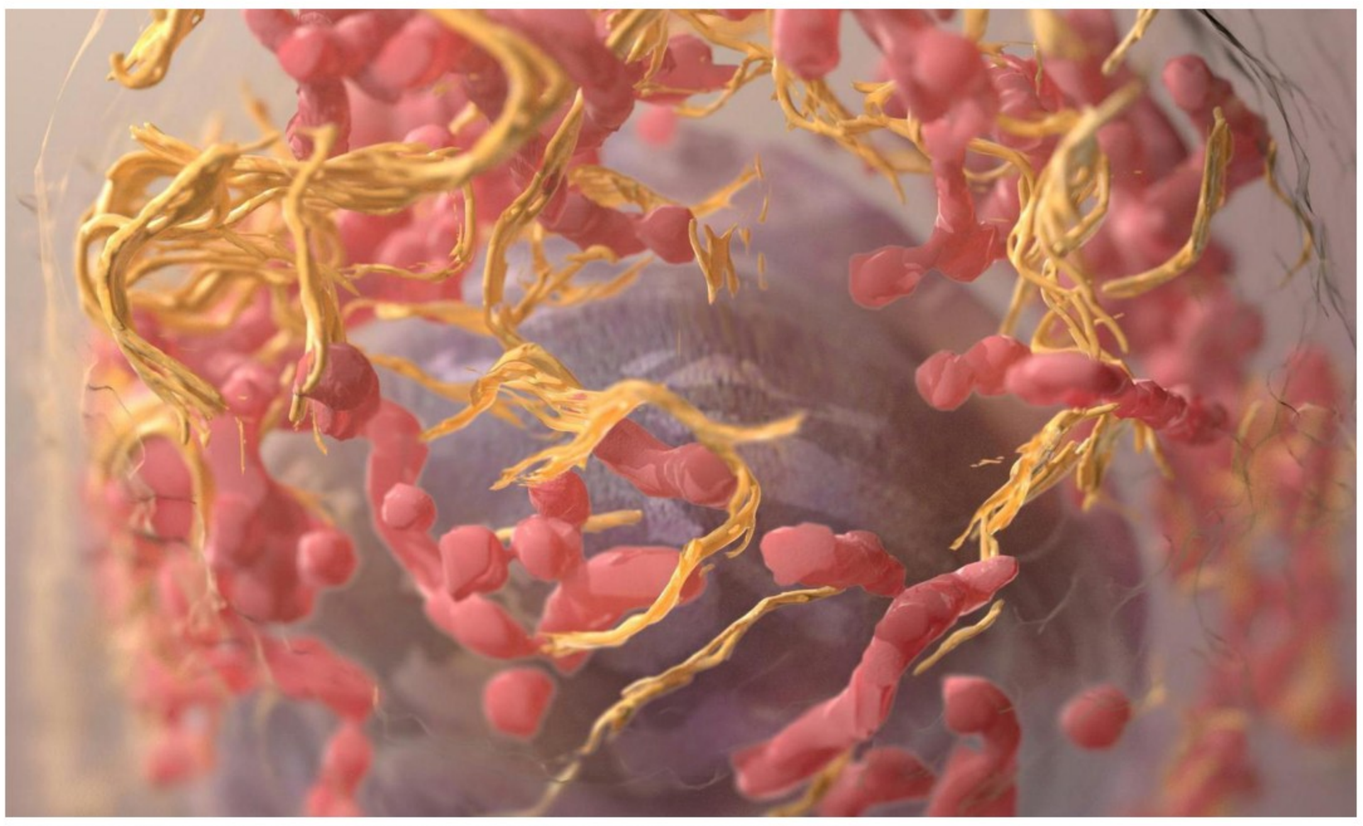
City revels in Ramzan spirit

A visitor photographing a chocolate fountain as traders sell various delicacies during Ramzan in Koramangala. People throng food stalls at Frazer Town, and Russell Market circle in Shivajinagar as part of the festival.
ALLEN EGENUSE J. AND SUDHAKARA JAIN

Cholesterol makes cells' nuclei squishy, helping melanoma spread

When cholesterol levels in the nuclear envelope were high, the nucleus became easier to deform; this is important because cancer cells often have to squeeze through tight gaps between other cells to spread and a squishier nucleus makes that squeezing easier, so the cancer can invade new tissues more successfully

D.P. Kasbekar



3D structure of a melanoma cell derived by ion abrasion scanning electron microscopy. NCI/UNSPLASH

THE GIST

A recent study led by scientists at the U.S. National Institutes of Health reported an unexpected driver of cancer spread: cholesterol in the membrane around the cell nucleus

The team found this pattern in melanoma and also in breast and prostate cancers. When the researchers lowered cholesterol levels in cancer cells, the cells became less invasive and less aggressive

The study pointed to a protein called the lamin B receptor (LBR). In many melanoma samples, the researchers found that cells produced too much LBR

Melanoma is one of the most dangerous common skin cancers. It starts in melanocytes, the skin cells that make melanin, the pigment that gives skin its colour.

Cancer doesn't appear overnight. A normal cell becomes cancerous in steps, as its DNA and its gene-control systems pick up changes over time. These changes push the cell to do three things: divide too much, avoid being destroyed by the immune system, and spread into other parts of the body. This spread is called metastasis, and it is what makes many cancers deadly.

Researchers want to know which changes matter most because those changes can become targets for treatment.

Becoming squishy

A recent study led by scientists at the U.S. National Institutes of Health reported an unexpected driver of cancer spread: cholesterol in the membrane around the cell nucleus. The nucleus is the cell's control room, where most of the DNA is stored. It's wrapped in a thin nuclear envelope, like a flexible shell.

The team found this pattern in melanoma and also in breast and prostate cancers. When cholesterol levels in the nuclear envelope were high, the nucleus became easier to deform. In other words, it became more squishy. This is important because cancer cells often have to squeeze through tight gaps between other cells to spread. A squishier nucleus makes that squeezing easier, so the cancer can invade new tissues more successfully.

High cholesterol did something else, too: it made the nuclear envelope more fragile. Fragile envelopes were more likely to tear in small, local spots. When a tear happens, the DNA inside can be exposed to forces that damage it. Damaged DNA can lead to new mutations, and some of those new mutations can make the cancer even more aggressive.

When the researchers lowered cholesterol levels in cancer cells, the cells became less invasive and less aggressive.

These findings also help explain an earlier observation: people with melanoma who were taking statins – drugs that lower cholesterol in the blood – seemed to show slower progression, on average, than people who were not.

Too much LBR

A big question arose: how did the cancer cells raise cholesterol in the nuclear envelope?

The study pointed to a protein called the lamin B receptor (LBR). Think of LBR as a tool with two parts sitting in the inner nuclear membrane. One part helps attach DNA (packed with proteins) to the inner surface of the nucleus. The other part helps the cell make cholesterol.

In many melanoma samples, the researchers found that cells produced too much LBR. When LBR levels were high, the cellular cholesterol levels rose as well, and the nucleus became both more deformable and more fragile. When the team reduced the LBR levels, the nuclear envelope became tougher and less easily deformed.

Curiously, if the researchers used a version of LBR that couldn't do its cholesterol-making job, then boosting the LBR didn't produce the same fragile, squishy nucleus. This suggested the cholesterol-making function was central to the effect.

The team also tested what happened when they removed cholesterol directly from cell membranes: the nuclear membranes became much less fragile than in untreated cells. This fit the idea that cholesterol was changing the physical properties of the nuclear envelope.

A treatment target

The researchers then asked a bigger question: could this process start early in cancer development? If high LBR and high cholesterol appear early, then repeated small tears in the nuclear envelope could increase DNA damage over time. More DNA damage could then raise the chances of new mutations, leading to the cancer becoming more malignant.

The team engineered melanoma cells in two versions: one set with normal LBR levels and the other where LBR had been silenced (i.e. which lacked LBR). They injected these cells into mice. Tumours from the control cells showed more ruptured nuclear envelopes than tumours made from LBR-silenced cells. This supported the idea that LBR could help melanoma invade and spread in a living organism.

These findings also help explain an earlier observation: people with melanoma who were taking statins – drugs that lower cholesterol in the blood – seemed to show slower progression, on average, than people who were not

Finally, the researchers checked patient data in the real world. In one large melanoma dataset, called TCGA-SKCM, patients whose tumours showed higher LBR expression early tended to have worse outcomes. Put together, the evidence suggested that LBR could be a useful therapeutic target for slowing cancer metastasis. "The finding that LBR-mediated cholesterol production causes nuclear envelope fragility is intriguing in the context of cancer, as high cholesterol has been associated with tumour development and immune cell invasion in melanoma," the researchers wrote in their paper.

"Furthermore, epidemiological studies have shown that long-term statin use to decrease serum cholesterol is associated with decreased cancer progression and severity in many cancer subtypes, including melanoma."

"Increased cholesterol synthesis driven by upregulated LBR could serve as a metabolic enhancer," the authors continued, "increasing tumour cells' ability to proliferate and cope with nutrient-deprived conditions. Together, our findings suggest that LBR could be a prognostic indicator in early melanoma disease progression, and could serve as a drug target to prevent metastatic dissemination of melanoma, thereby improving prognosis for patient survival."

Curiosity-driven

Scientists first discovered LBR's cholesterol-related role more than 25 years ago in research that had nothing to do with cancer. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers studying fungi identified genes involved in making sterols – which are cholesterol-like molecules in fungi. In the 1990s, when scientists compared DNA sequences, they noticed that a human gene, LBR, resembled a sterol-making gene in fungi.

That raised a curious question: could the human gene replace the broken fungal gene? It could. That experiment was early evidence that LBR is an enzyme that processes sterol.

Years later, that basic biology link helped researchers connect LBR to nuclear cholesterol and the spread of cancer. It's a clean example of how "why does this work this way?" research can eventually matter to medicine, even when no one can predict the connection in advance.

(D.P. Kasbekar is a retired scientist. kasbekardp@yahoo.co.in)

BIG SHOT

Brazilian scientists have identified a new species of giant dinosaur, whose bones are seen here, with ties to a similar animal found in Spain, reinforcing knowledge that land routes once connected parts of South America, Africa and Europe about 120 million years ago. Named *Dasosaurus tocantinensis*, the species is one of the biggest found in the South American country. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Sex bias: key to a DNA puzzle

For years, scientists noticed that modern humans carry very little Neanderthal DNA on their X chromosomes. To understand why, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania reversed the perspective and looked for early modern human DNA within ancient Neanderthal genomes.

In a study published in *Science* on February 26, they reported that interbreeding between Neanderthals and early modern humans was heavily sex-biased.

To find this, the team analysed the Altai Neanderthal genome — a female individual found in the Altai Mountains whose 1,22,000-year-old remains provide the oldest high-quality Neanderthal genome — and found a 62% excess of modern human ancestry on its X chromosome compared to its other chromosomes.

The finding allowed the team to rule out natural selection as the main cause for the missing DNA. Why? Because if biological incompatibility were the main problem, the Neanderthal X chromosome would have rejected modern human DNA. But instead it contained a surplus.

The researchers then tested whether migration patterns, such as females moving between groups, could explain the data. They found that even extreme migration models could not account for such a high 62% surplus. Instead, the most likely explanation was ancestry-specific mate preference, i.e. it was concluded that interbreeding primarily involved male Neanderthals and female modern humans.

Reconstructions of a Neanderthal man named "N" (left) and woman called "Wilma" at the Neanderthal museum in Germany. AP

Remarkably, this bias remained consistent across different encounters separated by 200,000 years, suggesting that the social dynamics between these two groups were stable over very long periods.

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Tuesday's rain brought some respite from the rising temperatures. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Sudden showers catch Bengalureans by surprise

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bengaluru received showers on Tuesday as several areas in the city received light rainfall, while some areas experienced hailstorms for a short duration. The light showers started around 3.30 p.m., bringing respite from the rising temperatures.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) observation data, the three weather stations – Bengaluru City, HAL Airport, and Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) – received trace rainfall till 5.30 p.m.

Bengaluru City recorded a maximum temperature of 32.3°C and a minimum of 21.4°C, while HAL Airport recorded a maximum and minimum of 32°C and 20.6°C. KIA recorded 33.7°C and 20.4°C respectively. IMD officials said that Bengaluru will continue to receive light rainfall in the next two to three days.

"Bengaluru received its first pre-monsoon showers on Tuesday. However, other parts of the State have been receiving pre-monsoon showers over the last few days. The rainfall will not be widespread; only some areas will receive rainfall," said IMD Scientist C.S. Patil.

N. Puviarasan, head, Meteorological Centre, Bengaluru, said the city experienced a a hailstorm for a short duration.

The IMD forecast for the city and the neighborhood for the next 36 hours is: "Partly cloudy sky, rain and thundershowers very likely towards evening and night. The maximum and minimum temperature are very likely to be around 33°C and 21°C respectively."

Mr. Patil said that there will be strong winds, thundershowers, and lightning along with a few incidents of hailstorms across the State.

According to IMD's forecast for Wednesday, coastal Karnataka will receive light to moderate rain/thundershowers at one or two places in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

In south interior Karnataka, there will be light to moderate rain/thundershowers with gusty wind (40-50 kmph) at a few places in Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, Hassan, Kodagu, Davanagere, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Bengaluru (Rural), Bengaluru (Urban), Tumakuru, Bengaluru South, and Mandya districts.

SEC for live webcasting from all polling booths during GBA polls to ensure transparency

The State government has recently mandated that local body polls in Karnataka be held using ballot papers instead of Electronic Voting Machines

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State Election Commission has written to the Karnataka government for live webcast of all polling stations for the upcoming Bengaluru civic elections, but the Finance Department has turned down the proposal and instead agreed to webcast from only a limited number of polling booths, said G.S. Sangreshi, Karnataka State Election Commissioner.

G.S. Sangreshi, Karnataka State Election Commissioner, in conversation with *The Hindu* on Tuesday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Mr. Sangreshi, who was in conversation with *The Hindu* on Tuesday, said that he would again write to the government asking it to reconsider the decision and arrange for live webcasting from all polling stations. "Since we are shifting to ballot papers for this election, we need to ensure transparency and protect the integrity of the elections. In this light, webcasting from all polling stations is necessary," he said.

The State government has recently mandated that local body polls in the State be held using ballot papers instead of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM). This came on the back of Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's Vote Chori campaign.

Mr. Sangreshi pointed to the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, where the Election Commission of India ensured live webcasting from all polling booths. "Webcasting would ensure transparency, avoiding issues that may arise later," he said.

"If allegations reach the court and one person from the booth claims that there has been some tampering within the booth and another person dismisses such an incident, there won't be any evidence to corroborate. On the other hand, if we webcast the activities, then there will be some proof," Mr. Sangreshi said.

He also stressed that the purpose of reverting to ballot papers was to prevent allegations of voter fraud. But if such allegations arise after using ballot papers as well, the whole purpose of changing the mode of conducting elections would be defeated, he said.

When asked if reintroducing ballot papers would mean going back in time, he said there was a legal provision for it, while also pointing out that several elections in the country and even in foreign nations like the U.S. are still conducted using ballot papers. However, he said counting ballot papers may take longer. He further said that there were many voters who had never voted using ballot papers and hence the SEC will take up an awareness campaign, once the election dates are announced.

G.S. Sangreshi pointed to the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, where Election Commission of India ensured live webcasting from all polling booths

Elections after May 25

The State Election Commissioner said that the Supreme Court had already set a deadline of June 30, before which civic polls in Bengaluru must be held. "We have told the court that we can hold the elections after May 25, to ensure it doesn't clash with examination season," he said.

Mr. Sangreshi revealed that the capacity of polling stations in the city will be around 1,500. When asked about allegations of members of the same family being listed in different booths, he said that due to the redrawing of boundaries, names may have shifted from one station to another and that these issues were being rectified. "Human errors are common during such processes. We are verifying everything and rectifying it," he said.

Answering a query about Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's allegations regarding the deletion of names from the voter list and his request for action against the officers responsible, he said that the District Election Officer is looking into the matter.

Techie duped of ₹14.6L in credit card fraud

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 40-year-old techie from Mahadevapura reportedly lost ₹14.6 lakh to cyber fraudsters posing as customer care executives of a private bank.

The victim approached the Whitefield Cyber Crime Police Station and lodged a complaint, upon which the police registered a case against the unknown persons.

According to the police, the complainant received multiple calls on her mobile phone from different numbers. The callers allegedly introduced themselves as representatives of a private bank.

They informed her that a "card protection plan" linked to her credit card needed to be deactivated, failing which she would be charged ₹5,000 per week. The fraudsters then sent her a malicious link and guided her to click on it and follow instructions to disable the plan.

Soon after clicking the link, her mobile phone was reportedly compromised. Within a short span, multiple unauthorised transactions were carried out from her credit card, leading to a loss of ₹14,60,464.

The police registered a case under Sections 66(C) (identity theft) and 66(D) (cheating by personation) of the IT Act, 2000, along with Sections 318(4) and 319(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

The police have advised the public not to click any random links they receive and crosscheck with the source before taking any steps.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Cost of treatments sanctioned under Ayushman Bharat

1.73 in ₹ lakh crore. As on February 28, 11.69 crore hospital admissions, worth ₹1.73 lakh crore, have been authorised under the Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Of these, 4.40 crore admissions were in the last two financial years. PTI

Sugar production output of India in 2025-26 so far

26.21 mn tonne. India's sugar production reached 26.21 million tonne so far in the ongoing 2025-26 marketing year, up by 10.5 per cent from the year-ago period, industry body ISMA said on Tuesday. The sugar output so far has exceeded the total net production of 26.12 million tonne in the full 2024-25 marketing year (October-September). PTI

Number of deaths in suicide attacks in Nigeria's Maiduguri

23 Coordinated explosions staged by suspected suicide bombers tore through a busy market and other areas in Nigeria's northeastern city of Maiduguri, killing at least 23 people and wounding more than 100 others, police said on Tuesday. The three blasts detonated on Monday evening just after Muslims broke their fast for the Ramadan holy month, authorities said. AFP

Candidates registered in Rajasthan's employment offices

22 In lakh. The data, provided by the Directorate of Employment under the RTI Act, shows that as of January 14, a total of 22,21,317 candidates were registered as job seekers in district employment offices across the State. It was further revealed that no candidate was recruited in the government sector through the employment offices in the past five years. PTI

CPI(M) workers booked over rally against ex-party leader

500 A case was registered against around 500 CPI(M) workers in connection with a mass rally organised in Kerala, against its former leader G. Sudhakaran, who quit the party recently. The Punnapra Police registered the case, for allegedly causing traffic disruption during the march held on March 14. PTI

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On scientific collaborations in BRICS

BRICS functions as a collaborative force aimed at establishing a multipolar world system. Cooperation in science, technology and innovation has been a key agenda for the grouping and has expanded over the years to include socially relevant areas such as energy, water, health and the environment

FULL CONTEXT

Krishna Ravi Srinivas
Sneha Sinha

The BRICS grouping, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is a globally significant collective defined by its substantial contributions to global GDP, scientific and technological capacity, natural resources, and total population. Since its formation, the group has evolved into a prominent international voice, representing countries that seek to challenge and provide an alternative to Western hegemony. BRICS functions as a collaborative force aimed at establishing a multipolar world system. While the group's positions on global finance and macro-economic issues are widely recognised, the depth of cooperation among member states regarding science, technology, and innovation (STI) remains less publicised.

At a time in which global scientific collaboration is increasingly dictated by geopolitical tensions, techno-nationalism, and strategic competition, often manifesting as sanctions and export controls, BRICS assumes a critical role in the global STI landscape. Through this platform, member nations coordinate their strategies, amplify their collective voice in global economic governance, and influence development finance through institutions like the New Development Bank.

These members are also vital contributors to global trade, energy production, and the supply of essential natural resources. The 2022 launch of BRICS+ signaled a move towards a more inclusive forum, fostering development and political cooperation across the Global South to reduce technological dependencies. This collaboration is now a concrete effort to build shared capacities through various framework programmes. The group's current membership has expanded to include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Iran.

Summit dialogue: World leaders partake in the 17th annual BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro on July 6, 2025. AP

THE GIST

- BRICS has emerged as a key international voice on global finance and macro-economic issues. However, the cooperation among member states on science, technology, and innovation remains less publicised.
- Scientific collaboration among BRICS nations has strengthened over time. Yet, areas that require heavy infrastructure or are more exploratory, such as mega-science projects and ocean or polar research, have developed slower.
- While working groups reflect these shared development priorities, their progress varies across different fields. There are questions regarding whether the current framework is sufficient for future needs.

Cooperation in STI

Cooperation in STI has been a part of the BRICS agenda since its early years. It was formally recognised in 2011 and later consolidated in meetings between senior officials and the BRICS Ministers of Science, Technology, and Innovation. A pivotal 2015 memorandum of understanding established STI as a core strategic pillar, providing the necessary institutional framework and operational signals for collaborative research and capacity-building. This framework has since expanded the scope of cooperation, allowing members to leverage their complementary strengths to address shared development challenges and advance frontier sciences.

The first BRICS Action Plan for Innovation Cooperation (2017-2020) tasked the Science, Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Partnership (STIEP) Working Group with implementing various programmes. These initiatives focused on entrepreneurship networks, the role of youth and women in STI, and collaborations regarding technology transfer and business incubators. Over time, BRICS has moved from early joint research calls focused on fundamental science toward prioritising innovation and technology transfer

These priorities are formally identified in annual ministerial declarations. The BRICS Ministers of Science, Technology, and Innovation meet once a year to approve and sign strategic documents. Within each member country, one or two lead agencies coordinate these activities, issue calls for proposals, and prepare project lists for approval during the respective country's presidency. For example, during India's chairmanship, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) serve as the lead agencies.

A clear emphasis on innovation-driven and technology-enabled ecosystems is evident in recent summit themes and initiatives such as iBRICS and the BRICS Technology Transfer Centre (TTC). The TTC has made notable progress in creating policy frameworks and institutional links for cross-border technology commercialisation. However, despite this progress, large-scale commercialisation of these technologies remains limited.

The focus of BRICS joint research calls has transitioned from basic science and enabling technologies to include more socially relevant areas such as energy, water, health, and the environment. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, placing a premium on public health, vaccine research, biosecurity, and digital health. Recent calls have integrated high-performance computing (HPC), advanced materials, information and communication technology (ICT), and space-related applications. Scientific collaboration has strengthened over time, with a growing focus on artificial intelligence and data-intensive science.

While working groups reflect these shared development priorities, their progress varies across different fields. Significant progress is visible in ICT and HPC, highlighted by the establishment of the BRICS Institute of Future Networks, as well as in space cooperation following a 2021 intergovernmental agreement. Conversely, areas that require heavy infrastructure or are more exploratory, such as mega-science projects and ocean or polar research, have developed slower.

The expansion of BRICS has positioned it as a more inclusive platform for knowledge exchange and collaborative research. The 2025 Declaration on AI, elevated artificial intelligence from a sub-theme, to a central pillar of multilateral governance. This declaration outlines a vision for AI governance that is equitable, inclusive, and development-oriented, moving the partnership towards a strategic collaboration with direct economic and societal relevance. While the 2021-24 Action Plan focused on networking and thematic frameworks, subsequent plans aim to scale projects for greater impact, focusing on biotechnology, climate tech, industrial innovation, and AI.

Under India's 2026 Presidency, with the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability', the group is positioned to deepen its scientific partnerships. The goal is to leverage expanded membership to strengthen capacities and address challenges like digital divides, public health crises, and climate resilience. However, participation from new members remains uneven; among the most recent additions, only Egypt and Iran joined the call for proposals issued last December. Additionally, the China-BRICS Research Centre on New Quality Productive Forces was recently inaugurated in Beijing. This center serves as an international platform for academic exchange and technological research.

Consequences and concerns

When compared to nations like South Korea, the National Innovation Systems (NIS) of BRICS countries exhibit various strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) is relatively lower across the group, with the exception of China. Research suggests that the gap between BRICS nations and South Korea is wide, and member countries excluding China have significant catching up to do according to various innovation indicators. With the expansion into BRICS+, the innovation systems of new members also require assessment and strengthening. This strengthening could be a priority for BRICS over the next decade, with the potential to eventually replicate these improvements across the broader Global South.

As noted by Stanford University visiting scholar Irina Dezhina, the heterogeneity of new members in terms of both economic development and scientific capacity makes it difficult to reconcile differing interests. Consequently, BRICS+ may need to focus on catalysing new "paired links" between specific members. Comparisons to the European Union (EU) suggest that BRICS could learn from the EU's wide variety of STI programs, as BRICS currently offers more limited options. Further, although competition for funding is intense, the total funding available remains modest.

Experts suggest that these programmes must reach a new qualitative level to effectively respond to major global challenges. Currently, however, research into STI cooperation among BRICS nations is limited, and the existing mechanism lacks a framework for regular study to provide data-driven inputs to member countries.

A way forward

While BRICS countries have achieved significant collaboration, there are questions regarding whether the current framework is sufficient for future needs. A primary concern is the lack of a permanent mechanism to manage STI cooperation. The current system, where the lead role rotates annually with the presidency, is not ideally suited for long-term requirements. BRICS could potentially model a central mechanism after the EU's Horizon Program, establishing a Secretariat to manage funds, issue calls for proposals, monitor progress, and review outcomes.

Developing a few long-term Mega-science Projects could also foster deeper cooperation. The framework for STI cooperation should eventually expand beyond just funding science and technology projects; it should promote research into the governance of STI and the impact of emerging technologies on BRICS+ nations. This would facilitate greater coherence in international treaty negotiations and help build capacity for STI governance.

In conclusion, while STI cooperation within BRICS has progressed significantly since 2015 despite various constraints, there is substantial room for improvement. Making the framework more effective, agile, and credible will enhance the group's legitimacy in the global arena. As the chair of BRICS+ in 2026, India has the opportunity to lead this transition.

(Krishna Ravi Srinivas is Adjunct Professor of Law, Director CoE in AI & Law, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. Sneha Sinha is Consultant, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi.)

Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi in the song. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'KD: The Devil' song: KVN Productions takes down track after severe backlash

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

KVN Productions, the banner behind Vijay's *Jana Nayagan* and *Toxic*, starring Yash, is in fresh trouble. The production house's Kannada movie, *KD: The Devil*, starring Dhruva Sarja and directed by Prem, is facing the ire of music fans on social media.

The song '*Sarse Ninna Seraga Sarse*', has run into a controversy for its lyrics. The special number, featuring Nora Fatehi and Sanjay Dutt, has been slammed by fans on social media for its "vulgar" and "suggestive" wordings. The song is written by Prem. The production had made the song private for a brief period on YouTube before uploading it back.

Protesting against the song, ardent Kannada fans remembered the glory days of songs from legendary lyricists such as Chi. Uday Shankar and R.N. Jayagopal and expressed their disappointment over the fall in standards.

Incidentally, the Hindi version of the song, titled '*Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke*', is facing a bigger backlash when compared to the Kannada original. The makers have made the Hindi version private. Only a promotional video of the Hindi version is available on Anand Audio YouTube channel. *KD: The Devil* will be dubbed in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi. The pan-India period gangster drama will hit the screens on April 30.

People on social media came down hard against the Hindi lyrics, saying the words demean women. Many expressed their surprise over the Censor Board passing the song without objections. "Sad to see commercial songwriting hit a new low," wrote playback singer Armaan Malik on X. "I am genuinely at a loss of words."

The row puts KVN Productions in the news for wrong reasons again. The production house is yet to release their highly-anticipated *Jana Nayagan*, billed as Tamil superstar's Vijay's final film. The movie, which waged a battle in court, is delayed indefinitely due to pending CBFC certification.

Toxic, co-produced by KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations helmed by Yash, has been postponed to June 4, 2026. Directed by Geetu Mohandas, the period gangster drama was supposed to hit the screens on March 19. The makers said the film had to be pushed to a new date due to the "ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia".

Earlier this year, the AAP Women's Wing lodged a complaint with the Karnataka State Commission for Women, calling the teaser of *Toxic* "harmful" and "inappropriate". *Toxic* also stars Rukmini Vasanth, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria, and Kiara Advani.

KDEM report: Karnataka adds 50 new GCCs in FY25

Samir Venugopal, VP at KDEM, says that GCC talent in the State has gone up from around 3.5 lakh in FY 2021 to 6.5 lakh in FY 2026

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With the Beyond Bengaluru push, more than 3300 startups were registered in cities outside Bengaluru. GETTY IMAGES

The Karntaka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM) supported setting up 40 new Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in Bengaluru and 10 in Beyond Bengaluru clusters in the financial year 2024-25, as per KDEM's annual report released on Tuesday. The State currently hosts more than 880 GCCs, up from around 500 GCCs in 2021.

Samir Venugopal, VP at KDEM, highlighted that GCC talent in the State has gone up from around 3.5 lakh in FY 2021 to 6.5 lakh in FY 2026. He also noted that Bengaluru has recorded the highest absorption of office space for three consecutive quarters.

According to the report, the year also saw the number of DPIIT-registered start-ups in the State rising to 16,700. With the Beyond Bengaluru push, more than 3,300 start-ups were registered in cities outside Bengaluru. According to the officials, four corporate proposals have been approved to train people under the Nipuna Scheme, and the programme will go live soon. Around 10,000 beneficiaries expected.

Sanjeev Gupta, CEO at KDEM, noted that the Beyond Bengaluru clusters have seen 15 GCCs in the last three years. According to him, 11,10,000 sq. ft. of IT park infrastructure is now available in these clusters.

In the coming year, under the initiative, KDEM aims to onboard 30 new companies, with 10 in each of the clusters, including Mysuru, Mangaluru and the Hubballi-Belagavi-Dharwad cluster. KDEM data suggests that 126 new companies have been set up across the clusters and more than 5,500 jobs have been generated so far under the Beyond Bengaluru programme.

For the coming year, the initiative aims to anchor 10-plus next-gen GCCs that focus on AI, cybersecurity, semiconductor, climate tech, and healthtech, and to form three clusters of NRI forums outside India to network and invite investment opportunities to the clusters.

While the State continues to lead on many fronts, Bhaskar Verma, NASSCOM, remarked that it is time for a reset. "While we can keep on talking about Karnataka numbers, the neighbouring State is taking a little lead," he said, citing a recent NASSCOM report. "While we still have huge numbers, we have to see what needs to be done differently," he said.

The event also saw an MoU being launched between STPI and KDEM. Arvind Kumar, Director General of STPI, said that consumer internet was a low-hanging fruit when the ecosystem was being created, and start-ups are now more serious about creating sustainable systems.

Airbound drone links Chandapura, E-City

BENGALURU: Narayana Health and Airbound, a Bengaluru-based aerial logistics company, have successfully completed a medical logistics pilot connecting Narayana Health's Chandapura clinic to its central laboratory at Narayana Health City in Electronics City by air using drones. Operating since January 2026, the four-km aerial route is completed in 10 minutes.

THE HINDU IN SCHOOL PRESENTS SCHOOL BUZZ
A Newspaper exclusively curated for School Students

GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR CLASS X

Auden School organised a graduation ceremony for the outgoing Class X batch (2024–25), celebrating the students' transition to the next phase of their academic journey. The venue was decorated for the occasion, attended by the management, staff, and graduating students. The programme began with the lighting of the lamp. The chief guest, Smt. Lakshmi Chandrashekar, artist and educationist, was welcomed to the event. A highlight of the ceremony was the felicitation of each student with a memento. Students delivered heartfelt speeches recalling their school journey and expressing gratitude to the management and teachers. The management and staff blessed the students and wished them success in their board examinations and future endeavours.

FAREWELL FOR SSLC BATCH

Madonna School, Udayanagar organised a farewell ceremony for their Std. X students, marking the send-off of the institution's 20th SSLC batch. The event was attended by Managing Director Mr. K. L. Nixon, Principal Mrs. E. A. Shiny, and chief guest, alumna Ms. Sharika Tabassum. A total of 124 students were bid farewell. The programme featured speeches and cultural performances by Std. IX students. A candle-light ceremony reflecting the school motto "Lead Kindly Light" was held. Best Outgoing Student and Council Member trophies were presented, and students received mementos.

SUCCESS IN SPELL BEE

Presidency School, Banashankari students achieved distinction in the State-level Online Spell Bee Competition. Nydhile S, Grade 2, secured 11th place and qualified for the National-level Spell Bee Competition. Viraj H Manu, Grade 3, secured 5th place at the State level. The school appreciated the students for their commendable performance and noted that their achievement reflects dedication and academic excellence. The accomplishment was welcomed by the school community, which congratulated the students and wished them continued success in their future academic and competitive pursuits.

For Subscription related queries, please contact Raghavendra Desai:
Handphone:+91 9986196254 | Email: desai.rnb@thehindu.co.in

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is issued on behalf of My client **Smt.K.Eswaramma W/o K.Jayaprathap Reddy** to bring the notice of the general public that Original absolute Sale deed doc. No.13738/2003-04 of Book-I, stored in CD No.137, dated. 16.07.2003/02.08.2003, registered in the office of the sub-registrar Bangalore North Taluk, executed by **Sri.U.Santhanam Pillai S/o Late Upakaram Pillai** rep by his GPA Holder **Sri.T.G.Chandra** in favour of **Sri.C.Prakash S/o Late Chimakannan** is missing / lost/ misplaced in respect of schedule property.

If any person/s, firm, company, institution or organization has any claim are holding the afore mentioned document or schedule property, they may contact the undersigned in writing within **7 days** from the date of this notice failing which it will be presumed that there are no claims.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the immovable property bearing **Site No.34,** Khata No.11, present BBMP E-Katha EPID No.4563363501, measuring East to West **40 feet** and North to South **30 feet,** in all measuring **1200 Sq.feet,** situated at **Lakshmipura Village, Yeshwanthapura Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk,** now comes under the Limits of BBMP, Bangalore and land bounded as:- **East by : 25 feet wide Road, West by : Site No.28, North by : Site No.33, South by : Site No.35.**

H. Prahlada, Advocate & Solicitor,
For H.P.Law, #2, 3rd Floor, Venkateshwara Complex, Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore-560022
M : 7760061073

BANGALORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

T. Chowdaiah Road, Kumara Park West, Bengaluru - 560 020

No: BDA/2025-26/SE0094 Date:17.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Bangalore Development Authority invites tenders for **"Scanning, Digitisation and implementation of advanced Document Management System (DMS) for Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) Records"**.

Tender documents are available on the e-Procurement portal from **16.03.2026** and the last date for bid submission is **02.04.2026, 5:30 PM.** Technical bids will be opened on **04.04.2026 at 11:30 AM.**

Interested bidders may refer to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** for detailed information or contact the EDP Cell, BDA head office, Bengaluru-560020. Any changes or updates will be published only on the e-Procurement portal, so bidders are requested to check the portal regularly.

Helpline / Whatsapp: 9483166622 (24x7) @BDAOfficialGok

Sd/- Head of Department, EDP Cell, BDA, Bengaluru.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-(IREPS) Tender Notice No: 51 UBL 2025-26 Dated: 11.03.2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders (IREPS) for the following works:

Sl.No.	Name of work	Approx. Value
1	**Hubballi Division:** Supply of Welding in Sr. Divisional Engineer / Head Quarters / Hubballi Jurisdiction.	Rs. 1,15,73,588.00
2	**Hubballi Division:** Strengthening of Pit Line in Hubballi Yard.	Rs. 2,31,94,626.00
3	**Hubballi Division:** Proposed Construction of station approach road along with storm water drain and improvements to land scapping in lower circulating area at Hubballi Railway Station.	Rs. 5,36,06,217.00
4	**Hubballi Division:** Proposed Construction of Type-II (16 Units) at Vidyaranya Nagar Railway Colony in lieu of quarter No. 1327 (A-P) Hubballi.	Rs. 4,06,71,104.00
5	**Hubballi Division:** Supply of weld in Sr. Divisional Engineer/West/Hubballi Jurisdiction.	Rs. 1,11,01 ,321.00
6	**Hubballi Division:** Kudgi (KDGI) - Proposed Construction of New Running Room at Kudgi (24 Rooms / 48 beds).	Rs. 3,22,39,095.00

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 09.04.2026**

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-Ordination Hubballi

PUB/1000/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2025-26

Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.

South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION (ISRO)
ISRO-TELEMETRY TRACKING & COMMAND NETWORK (ISTRAC)
(CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP)

Plot No.12&13, 3rd Main, 2nd Phase, Peenya Industrial Estate, Bengaluru-58. Ph: 080-28094541/ 4178, Fax: 080-28094180

BRIEF E-TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of President of India, **Sealed Item rate E-Tender** is invited online from Contractors of appropriate class for the following work in NIT by **Group Head,** ISTRAC, ISRO, Peenya, Bengaluru-58 (Ph:080-2809 4541, 4185, 4144).

Name of work	**Providing Street light poles and light fittings from substation to LUT Building including allied electrical works inside SCC Campus, ISTRAC, Bengaluru.**
E-Tender Notice	**ISTRAC/CMG/E/MAINT/E-Tender-125/ 2025-2026, Dated: 17.03.2026**
Estimated Cost put to tender	**Rs. 19.41 Lakhs**
Tender Document Details	**E-Tenders**
Period of Completion in months reckoned from the 15th day of date of issue of work order	**Four (04) months**
Period during which the tender document can be downloaded	**From 16.00 hrs. on 18.03.2026 to 04.04.2026 till 16.00 hrs.**
Bid Clarification	**From 11.00 hrs on 19.03.2026 to 05.04.2026 till 16.00 hrs.**
Last date & time for reply to Bid Clarifications	**06.04.2026 up to 16.00 hrs.**
Last date and time for receipt of tenders	**07.04.2026 up to 16.00 Hrs.**
Due date and time of opening of tenders.	**09.04.2026 after 11.00 Hrs.**
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	**Rs. 38,820/-**

For eligibility criteria and other details, interested tenderers may please refer the detailed bilingual (Hindi-English) Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) on the website: **https://isro.gov.in/Tenders.html** and tender free view at **www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO**

Sd/- Group Head, CMG

SCIENCE CITY OF ANDHRA PRADESH
Amaravati, Guntur Dist., A.P

Notification for e-Tender No.: 01/2026/CEO/SCAP

Science City of Andhra Pradesh invites e-Tenders for the **Supply and Installation of Exhibits** at the newly constructed **Science Museum at Kailasagiri, Visakhapatnam.** The e-Tender document can be dowloaded from the website **https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in/** starting from **18/03/2026 (Wednesday).** For further information, please contact **9966992499.**

DIPR 4917PP/CL, Dt:17-03-2026 **Sd/- CEO**

RAICHUR POWER CORPORATION LIMITED

(YERMARUS THERMAL POWER STATION)
(A JOINT VENTURE COMPANY OF KPCL & BHEL)
CIN : U40101KA2009PLC049582

No.KPCL/2025-26/IND2494 Dtd:12.03.2026

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through e-Procurement portal only)

RPCL,YTPS invites tender for the **Supply of 90KL of LDO IS:15770(2008) through Road Tankers required for Yermarus Thermal Power Station.** Last date & time for bid submission along with Technical & Financial bid (Part I & II) is on **23.03.2026 up to 14.30 hrs.** The brief bid notification containing the pre-qualifying criteria for the bidders, calendar of bid activities & other details can be accessed from e-Procurement portal 2.0 **(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** Any further details can be obtained from the E**xecutive Engineer (M-2), RPCL, Yermarus Thermal Power Station, Yermarus-584 134. Dist. Raichur Tele/fax:08532-286003. Cell: +91-8277502840 E-mail: eechpmytpskpcl@karnataka.gov.in / eechprpcl@gmail.com**

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

DRM (Electrical) NWR Ajmer on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders for the following work up to 15:00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. **Sr. No.: 1. Tender No.: DRM-Elect-38-25-26, Date: 16.03.2026. Name of work: All Div.**: Electrical work due to implementation of energy efficiency measures in service buildings. **Approximate cost of work**: ₹ 67,18,953/-. **Earnest Money**: ₹ 1,34,400/-. **Date of closing E-Tender**: 01.04.2026. Sr. **No.: 2. Tender No.: DRM- Elect-39-25-26 Date: 16.03.2026. Name of work: All Div.**: Electric work due to augmentation of power supply system of ZRTI, Udaipur. **Approximate cost of work**: ₹ 96,10,735/-. **Earnest Money**: ₹ 1,92,200/-. **Date of closing E-Tender**: 07.04.2026. The details of above E-tender are available on website **www.ireps.gov.in** **375-AR/26**

Follow us on : /NWRailways NWRailways_

PUBLIC NOTICE

My Client, Mr. Indra Kumar K.V, S/o. Sri. Vishwanath Reddy Kanchi, Aged about 45 Years, Residing at 1130/13, 2nd Floor, 3rd Main, Karnataka Bank ATM, Vijayanagar, Bengaluru-560040, intend to purchase Vacant Site bearing No.9 (Old No.38/1 and Earlier Nos.98 & 84), EPID No.5697395158, 2nd Cross Road, TCM Rayon Road, Cottonpet, Bengaluru, measuring East to West: 32 Feet 6 Inches and North to South: 50 Feet, in all measuring 1625 Sq.Ft., morefully described in the Schedule-A hereunder.

My Client also intends to purchase Vacant Site bearing No.10 (Old No.98/1 and Earlier No.84), EPID No.5224583416, 2nd Cross Road, TCM Rayon Road, Cottonpet, Bengaluru, measuring East to West: 27 Feet on the Northern Side, 44 Feet on the Southern Side and North to South: 50 Feet on the Eastern Side and 36 Feet 6 Inches on the Western Side, in all measuring 1535 Sq.Ft., morefully described in the Schedule-B hereunder.

If any person/s or Financial Institution/s or Bank/s etc., has/have any claim or right over the Schedule-A & B Properties, they should file his/her/their objection/s in writing along with supporting documents to the undersigned within seven days from the date of this notice. If no objections are received from anyone within the stipulated time, it will be presumed that nobody has any objection and my Client will proceed to conclude the transaction in respect of the Schedule-A & B Properties.

SCHEDULE-A

All the piece and parcel of the building bearing present Municipal No.9 (Old No.98, Earlier No. 84), EPID No.5697395158, measuring East to West: 32 Feet 6 Inches and North to South: 50 Feet, in all measuring 1625 Sq.Ft, with building consisting of Ground and First Floor totally measuring 799 Sq Ft situated at 2nd Cross Road, TCM Rayon Road, Cottonpet, Bengaluru, and bounded as hereunder:

East by : Road (2nd Cross)
West by : Site No.10
North by : Armugam's Workshop
South by : Shivas Stay Lodge

SCHEDULE-B

All the piece and parcel of the Vacant Site bearing present Municipal No.10 (Old No.98/1, Earlier No.84), EPID No.5224583416, measuring East to West: 27 Feet on the Northern Side, 44 Feet on the Southern Side and North to South: 50 Feet on the Eastern Side and 36 Feet 6 Inches on the Western Side, in all measuring 1535 Sq.Ft situated at 2nd Cross Road, TCM Rayon Road, Cottonpet, Bengaluru, and bounded as hereunder:

East by : Site No.9
West by : Road
North by : Private Property
South by : BBMP Building

G.Sanjay, Advocate,
No.807, "Jyothi", 5th Main Road, Vijayanagar, BENGALURU-560 040
Ph-9886131386.
Bangalore Dated: 15.03.2026.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public are hereby informed that my client has negotiated and has agreed to Purchase the Converted Land Properties which is more fully described in the Schedule 'A' and 'B' Properties given below from **Mr. MOHEMMED ISAQ,** Aged about 28 years, S/o. Mr.Mohammed Yusuf, R/at. No.10, 1st Cross, Near ESI Hospital, Victoria Layout, Austin Own, Bengaluru South, Bengaluru-560047, **Any persons claiming** with regard to the Schedule 'A' and 'B' Properties or any part thereof should write to the undersigned within 7 **(Seven) days** from the date of publication of this public Notice with Documentary Proof on which they have based their claim, failing which, it is deemed that there is no impediment to complete the document of my client and will proceed on the basis that there are no claims of whatsoever nature.

SCHEDULE 'A' & 'B' PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of (i) Converted Land Property bearing Sy.No.12/1 (Old Sy.No.12), measuring 0-30 guntas. Schedule 'A' Property. together with all rights, Appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on

East by : Property of Krishnappa,
West by : Anthea Layout,
North by : Anthea Layout, and
South by :Property belongs to Krishnappa.

And (ii) Converted Land Property Sy.No.12/2 (Old Sy.No.12), measuring 0-08 guntas, Schedule 'B' Property. In total 38 guntas, together with all rights, Appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on:

East by : Anthea Layout,
West by : Property belongs to Jayanna,
North by : Anthea Layout, and
South by : Property belongs to Krishnappa.

Situated at Kadumutsandra Village, Lakkuru Hobli, Malur Taluk. duly Converted from Agriculture to non-Agricultural property vide No. ALN-SR-(K)756/06-07, dated:30-10-2007 by Deputy Commissioner, Kolar District.

C.S. HASHIM SAEED, ADVOCATE
Dr. Alam's Estate, Shanthi Layout
Bangalore - 560 016
Mob:9480390555

Date : 18.03.2026. - Place: Bengaluru,

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
(PUBLIC WORKS, DEPT.)

No. PWD/BGM/TND/TA/AE/2025-26/8440 Date: 17.03.2026

ITEM RATE TENDER NOTIFICATION
(KPP PORTAL)

The Executive Engineer, PWD Belagavi Division Belagavi invites item rate tenders from the eligible contractors registered in KPP Portal in Public Works Department under **KW-1, 2, 3 & 4** Standard tender documents for a work under **4059 CMIDP Works, 3054 SH Bridge Maintenance, 3054 MDR Bridge Maintenance, 2216Dept Building Maintenance, 5054 MDR Improvements, 5054 SH Improvements 5054 KRDCL Works, 3054 SH Maintenance, 3054 MDR Maintenance, 8443 Deposit Works, 4059 SCP-TSP Works, 4059 Dept Buildings** total 31 number of works with minimum and maximum tender amounts of **Rs.5.07 Lakhs** and **Rs.475.81 Lakhs** respectively and minimum and maximum **EMD** amount of **Rs.9,300/-** and **Rs.7,13,800/- Part-1**: Tender receipt Date is on **27.03.2026 up to 4.30 PM,** Technical Bid Opening Date is on **30.03.2026 after 4.45 PM Part-2:** Tender receipt Date is on **04.04.2026 up to 4.30 PM** and Financial Bid Opening Date is on **07.04.2026 after 4.45 PM Part-3**: The Executive Engineer, PWD Belagavi Division Belagavi invites Quotations for different Works at Suvarna Soudha Belagavi, Lift Maintenance of court building at Belagavi, Equipments at AEE office QC Subdivision and Rehabilitation of KRDCL Bridges. The above work is to be undertaken and quotations are being invited for some selected items as the prices are not available in the Uni SR for the year **2023-24** (continued for the year **2025-26**) for the preparation of the estimate of the work. Quotations are invited by The Executive Engineer, PWD Belagavi Division Belagavi on or before **27.03.2026.** For more information contact the office of the undersigned and www.Kppp.karnataka.gov. in after **17.03.2026.** (Note:1) If no bids received, 3 days One Time auto extension activated.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Public Works Department. Belagavi Dn. Belagavi.

DIPR/Belgavi/2103/Deshpandepublicity/2025-26

IN THE COURT OF THE IX ADDL CITY CIVIL AND SESSIONS JUDGE, AT BANGALORE

O.S. No. 1523 / 2021 (CCH - 5)

Plaintiff : M/s Prerana Motors Pvt. Ltd.
Having office at: No.116, First Floor, "Pride Hulkul", Lalbagh Road, Bangalore - 560 027.

Vs.

Defendants : Mr. Venkatesh (Defendant No.10)
Residing at: No.19/12, Deepa Complex, Ring Road, Papareddypalya, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore - 560 072.

SUIT SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT NO.10 UNDER ORDER V RULE 20(1-A) OF THE CIVIL PROCEDURE CODE THROUGH PAPER PUBLICATION

Defendant No. 10 Address: Mr. Venkatesh, # 19/12, Deepa Complex, Ring Road, Papareddypalya, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore - 560 072.

Whereas the Plaintiff in the above Plaint have filed this Plaint against you, i.e. Mr. Venkatesh (Defendant No. 10), seeking the leave to sell/dispose of vehicles for recovering of amounts towards unpaid invoices and such other reliefs and you are summoned to appear before the CITY CIVIL AND SESSIONS JUDGE (CCH - 5), Bangalore.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the 26 day of March 2026, at 11:00 AM to defend the above suit, the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this court on this 16th day of February 2026.

By Order of the Court Senior Sheristedar,
City Civil Court, Bengaluru.
Advocate for the Plaintiff
Address: Ashlar Law, Municipal No. 96, 79, 2nd Floor, Infantry Road Cross, Bangalore - 560 001

Government of Karnataka
BIDAR CITY CORPORATION
Phone: 08482-240432 Fax: 08482–240432
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर
Web Site:www.bidarcity.mrc.gov.in E-mail ID:itstaff_ulb-bidar@yahoo.com, ka.bidar.cmc@gmail.com

No: BMC/ENG/CR-226/2025-26 Dated:- 16-03-2026.

TENDER NOTIFCATION

1) Name of work DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56366 (FOR CAT-IIA), DMA/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT56372, DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_INDENT56374, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56373, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56375, DMA/2025-26/WS/WORK_INDENT56376, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56377, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56379 (FOR CAT-IIA), DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT56380, DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT56386, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56391 (FOR SC), DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56404, DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56405 (FOR SC) DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56407 (FOR ST) DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT56408 (FOR CAT-I), 2) Estimated cost As per e-portal, 3) Eligibility of Agency / Consultant As per e-portal, 4) EMD amount As per e-portal, 5) Last date for submission of tender **01-04-2026 upto 04.00 PM,** 6) Technical bid opening **02-04-2026 at 04.30 PM,** 7) Address for communication Commissioner, City Municipal Corporation Bidar, Pin code 585401, Email : itstaff_ulb_bidar@yahoo.com 08482-240432, 8) Website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/

Sd/- Commissioner
City Municipal Corporation,Bidar

DIPR/Bidar/361/KSMC&A/2025-26

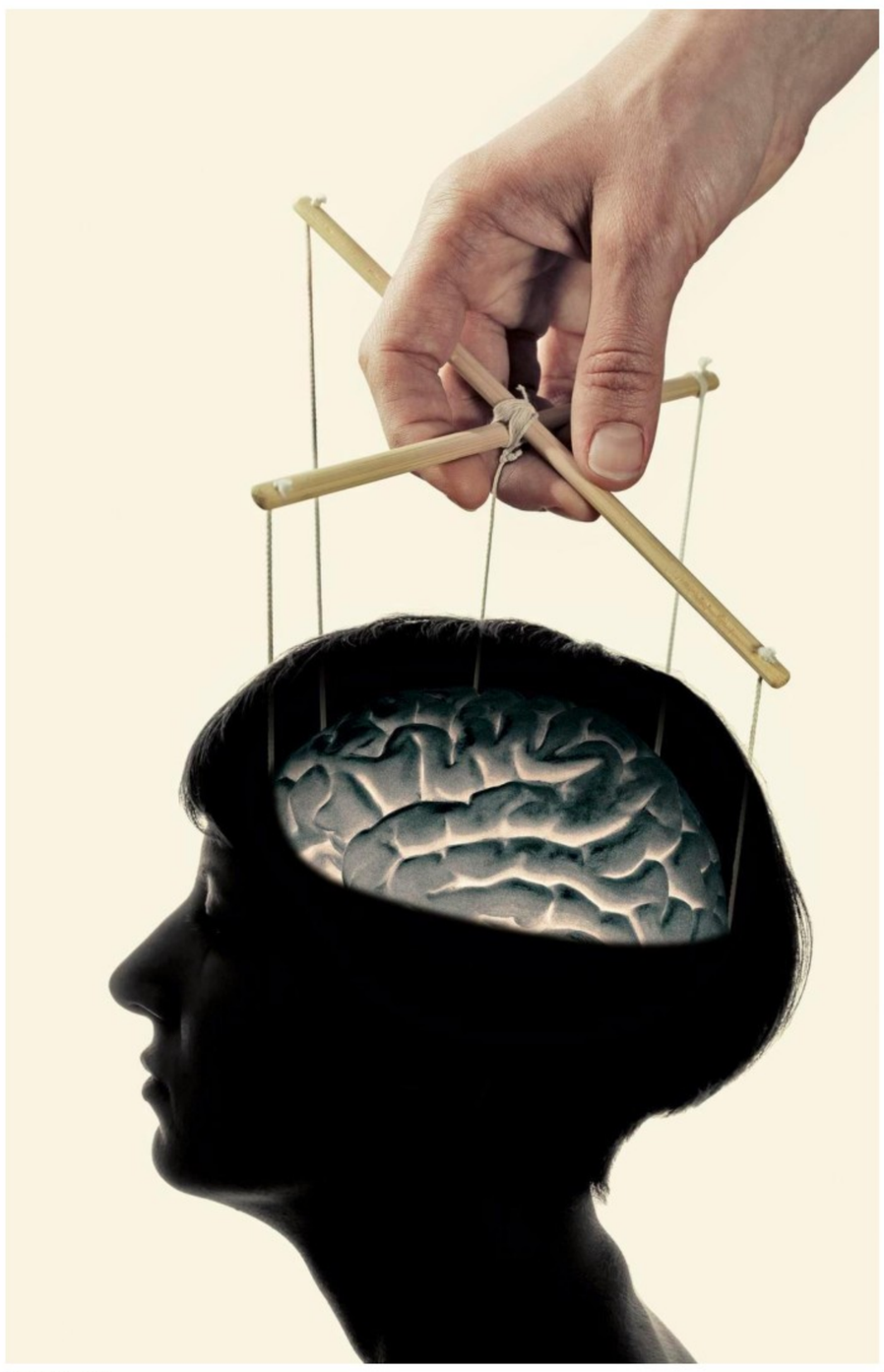
A BG-BGE

KEYWORD

Moral disengagement and the impact of power

A psychological concept that explains how individuals rationalise immoral and unethical actions by deflecting responsibility and minimising consequences, often enabling those in power to legitimise harmful decisions

Rebecca Rose Varghese



GETTY IMAGES

Even with the establishment of norms and laws to maintain morality and ethical behaviour, violence and unethical behaviour have always been part of society. Throughout history, harmful acts, especially when done by those who control the narrative, have rarely been presented as immoral. Instead, they are reframed in ways that make them appear necessary, justified, or even beneficial. There are many examples of this, both old and new. The killing of indigenous populations during colonisation was often described as "civilising" territories. War on weaker or defenceless countries for the purpose of strategic or economic interests is presented as a necessary operation, justified in the name of security or national defence. And, the consequent civilian deaths are labelled as "collateral damage." Violence or harassment against women and young girls has been and continues to be dismissed as "accidental dalliance" or "minor deviance", while the behaviour of the women themselves is always questioned, shifting the blame from perpetrators to the victims.

Some of the latest examples of this can be seen in how Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems use people's data without their consent for training purposes while presenting it as technological progress, and in how companies displace millions of workers with AI, and frame it as development. In many such situations, the perception of the act shifts, depending on who is involved, how it is described, and who holds power.

The concept of moral disengagement

Many theories attempt to explain harmful behaviour, violence and crime by focusing on individual deviance and social structures. One such concept introduced by the Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura was moral disengagement. The concept refers to the psychological processes through which individuals rationalise or justify harmful behaviour while continuing to see themselves as moral people.

Developed in the 1990s, the concept explains how people can commit harmful acts without experiencing strong guilt or moral conflict. This can happen in several ways, by minimising one's responsibility, ignoring the consequences of actions, blaming victims, or convincing oneself that the act serves a greater good.

However, moral disengagement does not operate only at the level of individuals. Within power-elite networks, these practices can function collectively. Shared vocabularies and institutional language are used to diffuse responsibility, limit scrutiny, and help sustain authority.

Mechanisms of moral disengagement

According to Bandura, there are several mechanisms through which individuals disengage from moral responsibility. One of these is moral justification, where harmful actions are framed as having a moral purpose, such as protecting national security or defending citizens. Another is advantageous comparison, where an action is made to appear less harmful by comparing it to something worse, allowing it to be presented as the "lesser evil." Displacement of responsibility occurs when individuals or institutions believe that they are not personally accountable for the action, as they are simply following orders, a dynamic often discussed in relation to violence by soldiers.

Similar to this, is the idea of diffusion of responsibility, where accountability becomes spread across actors, such that it becomes difficult to pinpoint who is responsible for the deed. Distortion of consequences involves minimising or ignoring the harm caused by an action, especially when the consequences appear distant or abstract. Finally, dehumanisation and attribution of blame occur when victims are portrayed as less human, dangerous, or responsible for their own suffering, reducing empathy for them, making it easier to justify the immoral action committed against them. Together, these mechanisms allow individuals/institutions to maintain a positive moral self-image even while participating in harmful actions or decisions. Moral disengagement, therefore, does not mean that people lack morality; rather, it shows how moral reasoning can be cognitively reorganised to make harmful conduct appear acceptable.

Euphemistic labelling and Media Framing Theory

One other key mechanism that enables moral disengagement through language is euphemistic labelling. Here, harmful actions are described using sanitised or technical language that makes them appear less severe. By replacing morally charged words with neutral terms, the emotional weight of an action is reduced, making it easier to justify. For instance, phrases such as "collateral damage" instead of civilian deaths or "enhanced interrogation" instead of torture transform violence into what appears to be a technical or bureaucratic procedure.

Language has the potential to become even more powerful when it is amplified through the media. Media institutions play a crucial role in shaping public perception, as they can influence how events are interpreted by choosing particular words, narratives, and frames. As discussed in the Media Framing Theory developed by Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, the way an issue is presented can shape how audiences understand its causes, consequences, and moral implications. In practice, media framing can sometimes support the interests of political elites and powerful institutions by softening or obscuring the reality of their harmful actions.

In discussions surrounding the cases of child rape and trafficking by influential people like Jeffrey Epstein and other political leaders, many news reports used terms such as "underage girls" or "young women". Such phrasing softens the idea of abuse and violence by framing it as sexual misconduct rather than child rape. Phrases like "sex with a minor" also imply mutual participation, obscuring the coercion and power imbalance involved.

Similarly, in this case, bureaucratic language was used that often referred to terms like a "network," "client list," or "recruitment," which made the operation sound like a corporate enterprise rather than an organised system of sexual exploitation.

Euphemistic language is also common in military contexts. In discussions of military operations in places such as Gaza, terms like "airstrikes," "collateral damage," or "security operations" can replace more direct descriptions such as bombing residential areas or killing civilians. Technical and euphemistic language reframes violence as strategic or procedural rather than highlighting human suffering, with the neutral nature of the terminologies, often reducing the emotional and ethical impact of a situation.

Moral disengagement and power

Moral disengagement becomes particularly significant in systems of power. Large institutions, including states, militaries, corporations, and bureaucracies, often operate through complex hierarchies and specialised roles. Within such systems, responsibility can easily become fragmented.

Those at the top of a hierarchy may justify harmful policies as necessary for national security, economic growth, or social order. Institutions and individuals within bureaucratic levels may diffuse responsibility by pointing to procedures or institutional rules. Media institutions may also shape public perception by softening or obscuring the reality of harmful actions. Civilians consuming such information may be limited to a neutral understanding of the situation due to the obscured nature of the information presented to them, and may therefore comply.

Key takeaways

Bandura's theory helps explain how individuals or institutions continue to propagate violence by reframing and disengaging from moral standards through cognitive and linguistic mechanisms, instead of openly rejecting morality.

Recognising these behaviours becomes crucial if there is any hope of resisting and challenging individuals and institutions that rely on moral disengagement to sustain themselves. Understanding these mechanisms enables people to question such systems by demanding accountability, insisting on transparency, and using language that accurately reflects the reality of a situation. Thus, the concept becomes especially important in the contemporary geopolitical context, as it helps people better navigate the world around them and critically question the narratives, policies, and decisions presented to them.

(Rebecca Rose Varghese is a freelance journalist.)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"I understand that Dev Anand is extremely happy that Yuktha has won the Miss World title."

"Why should he be happy?"

"He is planning to remake his old hit, 'Teen Deviyan'. This time he is going to cast Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen, and Yuktha. The three beauties from India."

"Who is going to play the hero?"

"What a silly question! The evergreen Dev Anand, of course! And if we turn a Nelson eye to the problem of...."

"....Nelson eye? Who is this Nelson you are talking about?"

"Horatio Nelson. He was an Admiral in the English Navy in the early 1800s."

"Oh, that Nelson. I remember reading about him in one of the history lessons. Wasn't he the man who destroyed the French and Spanish fleets in the Battle of Trafalgar?"

"That's right. Nelson died in that battle."

"He was blind in one eye, wasn't he?"

"He was blind in his right eye. And that's what the expression 'to turn a Nelson eye' to something means – to turn a blind eye to something."

"But what's the connection? I don't...."

"....there's a story behind that. You see, during one of the many battles that Nelson fought, one of his superiors signalled from another ship for Nelson to withdraw. When the sailors on Nelson's ship pointed this out to him, Nelson placed a telescope on his right eye – his blind eye. He then told his men to continue fighting as he had not seen a signal ordering him to withdraw."

"So Nelson wasn't good at following orders, was he?"

"I guess you could say that! He used to turn a blind eye to them."

"And in Nelson's case, he literally turned a blind eye to them."

"When you turn a blind eye to something, you pretend not to see something, even though you already have. Here is an example...."

"....let me! Let me! When I informed the Principal about how the students cheated in the exams, he turned a Nelson eye to the problem. Can I say that?"

"Yes. My boss has been turning a Nelson eye to the corruption that has been going on for several years now."

"Most Indians have turned a Nelson eye to the problem of corruption."

"Yes, that's the sad part. We seem to wink at the...."

"....wink at? What does it mean?"

"When you 'wink at' something that someone has done, you pretend not to see it, even though the person may have done something terribly wrong."

"Even though he/she may have done something illegal?"

"I guess you could say that. Here's an example. The party chief refused to wink at the corruption charges levelled against the candidate."

"When the former Minister's house was raided, they found that he had several foreign accounts. The income tax officials were unwilling to wink at the large sums of money."

"My cousin's wife buys new curtains every two months."

"Doesn't your cousin say anything to her?"

"No, he merely winks at his wife's extravagance."

Published in The Hindu on December 14, 1999

THE DAILY QUIZ

Here is a quiz on events that happened on March 18

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Sindhu Nagaraj

QUESTION 1

On this day in 2000, this leader of the pro-independence movement that sought statehood for the Republic of China (Taiwan), was elected president of Taiwan, breaking the Nationalist Party's 55-year rule. Name the leader.

QUESTION 2

This American singer-songwriter and guitarist who was a leading and influential performer in rhythm-and-blues and rock-and-roll music, died at age 90 on this day. Name the musician.

QUESTION 3

In 1990 on this day, in what was considered the world's biggest art heist, two men pretending to be police officers stole 13 works, including paintings by Rembrandt and Johannes Vermeer. This happened in which country?

QUESTION 4

In 1965 on this day, which Soviet cosmonaut became the first man to walk in space?

QUESTION 5

Identify this British Prime Minister (May 28, 1937 - May 10, 1940) whose name is identified with appeasement toward Adolf Hitler's Germany. He was born on this day.

Identify this American author who was born on this day in 1932. REUTERS

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. U.S. President Harry S. Truman referred to his country's involvement in the Korean War as: **Ans: Sponsor of United Nations police action**

2. After the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, the U.S. Congress authorised this President to use military force in Vietnam through a joint resolution. **Ans: Lyndon B. Johnson**

3. The NATO bombed this country during the Kosovo War. The air campaign left over 500 dead. Also, does the NATO commit to UN Charter? **Ans: Yugoslavia; Yes**

4. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war began in 2014. In which year did Vladimir Putin launch a full-scale invasion, and what term did he use to describe the escalation? **Ans: 2022; Special military operation**

5. The post-9/11 Authorisation for Use of Military Force (AUMF) resolution enabled the War on ___. The law has been used by successive U.S. leaders to initiate 'counter-terror' activities leading to more than 4.5 million deaths. **Ans: terror**

Visual: President Barack Obama took the U.S. into war against X (country) as part of a NATO-led coalition. Identify X, as well as the de facto military leader pictured in the mosaic who was overthrown and later killed. **Ans: Libya; Muammar Gaddafi**

Early birds: K.N. Viswanathan | Lalchand Bhutani | Pulkit Sathe | Tito Shiladitya | Sukdev Shet

Word of the day

Debilitate:
make weak

Synonyms: drain, enfeeble

Usage: *Constant stress can debilitate your immune system.*

Pronounciation:
https://newsth.live/zb24fs

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɪˈbɪlɪteɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

19-year-old allegedly killed by fiancé

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 19-year-old girl was murdered, allegedly by her fiancé, at an abandoned house in D.J. Halli on Tuesday.

The victim, identified as Zoya, had recently been engaged to 20-year-old Sabeel, and the couple was to get married soon. According to preliminary police reports, at around 6 a.m., Sabeel allegedly took Zoya to an abandoned house in the Sakkare Mandi area, which belongs to his family. While inside the house, the couple reportedly got into a heated argument.

In a fit of rage, Sabeel is said to have used a sharp weapon to slit Zoya's throat, killing her on the spot. The entire incident is believed to have occurred within a short span of time, after which the accused fled the scene. At around 6.30 a.m., Sabeel's family members arrived at the house and found Zoya lying in a pool of blood. They immediately alerted the police. On receiving information, the D.J. Halli Police rushed to the spot, secured the scene, and began an investigation. The body has been shifted to a hospital for autopsy.

Absconding
Police have launched a manhunt to trace the suspect, who is absconding. Further investigation is under way to ascertain the exact motive behind the murder.

Railway recruitment exam postponed after protests by KRV

The organisation has been opposing the exclusion of the regional language, arguing that it disadvantages local candidates

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Police tightened security arrangements amid a protest by members of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike against the exclusion of Kannada in railway recruitment exams, at Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Bengaluru City Railway Station, in Bengaluru on Tuesday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

The South Western Railway (SWR) on Tuesday deferred its scheduled departmental recruitment examinations after protests by members of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV) objecting to the tests being conducted only in English and Hindi.

The examinations were part of an internal promotion process in the Hubballi Division, covering 295 vacancies. These included 194 posts of Goods Train Manager under the 60% promotional quota, along with additional posts to be filled through the Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) under the 15% quota.

According to a statement issued by Manjunath Kanamadi, Chief Public Relations Officer of SWR, 12 departmental selection examinations for staff of the Hubballi Division and Headquarters had been scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday at the Railway Recruitment Cell (RRC) in Hubballi. "However, on Tuesday, at around 8.30 a.m., members of Kannada Rakshana Vedike staged a protest at the entrance of the RRC office, restricting the entry of candidates and examination staff. The protesters demanded that the departmental promotional examinations be conducted in Kannada as well," the statement said.

SWR further stated that the issue of including Kannada as a medium for departmental examinations will be taken up for discussion at an appropriate level. "In view of the prevailing situation, the computer-based tests scheduled on Tuesday and Wednesday have been postponed. Revised dates will be notified in due course," it added.

Protests were reported from multiple examination centres across Karnataka, including Bengaluru and Hubballi. KRV activists staged demonstrations outside venues demanding that candidates be allowed to write the examinations in Kannada. The organisation has been opposing the exclusion of the regional language, arguing that it puts Kannada-speaking candidates at a disadvantage and restricts their access to promotional opportunities.

KRV leaders also pointed out that following similar protests in 2008, railway recruitment examinations had been conducted in regional languages, including Kannada. They alleged that the authorities had now reverted to holding the tests only in Hindi and English, going back on earlier assurances. KRV president T.A. Narayana Gowda said, "The organisation will not allow the examinations to proceed unless Kannada is included as a medium."

Railway slammed
Reacting to the developments, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah criticised the Railway authorities for their handling of the issue. In a post on X, he said the sudden cancellation had left Kannada-speaking employees in a state of uncertainty. He added that thousands of employees had already raised concerns over the lack of an option to write the exams in Kannada.

"The Railways ignored peaceful protests and cancelled the examinations at the last moment, leading to confusion. Had the department acted earlier and allowed Kannada, this situation could have been avoided," he said.

Meanwhile, Kannada Development Authority (KDA) chairman Purushottam Bilimale has written to Karnataka MPs, urging them to push the Union government to ensure that railway recruitment and promotion examinations are conducted in Kannada, along with other regional languages.

In his letter, Prof. Bilimale stated that the absence of Kannada in such examinations has caused widespread dissatisfaction among aspirants. He said "allowing candidates to write exams in their mother tongue is in line with constitutional principles of equality and equal opportunity."

According to PfA Wildlife Hospital, spotted deer are among the most commonly rescued animals along the edges of Turahalli forest.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bengaluru NGO helps replenish water sources inside Turahalli forest

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Operation Quench Thirst focuses on replenishing critical water sources inside Turahalli forest

The PfA Wildlife Hospital, a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and rehabilitating urban wildlife, has been running Operation Quench Thirst to ensure regular replenishment of water sources inside Turahalli forest in Bengaluru.

The NGO said that every summer, spotted deer are among the most commonly rescued animals along the edges of Turahalli forest, often found injured after encountering dangers that arise when they stray out of forest zones, including road accidents. "In 2025 alone, PfA rescued many spotted deer under such circumstances," it said.

The NGO added that deer, peafowl, golden jackals, babblers and mynas are frequently rescued near forest boundaries during peak summer, highlighting the growing stress on wildlife due to drying water sources.

"When water sources inside forests dry up, animals are forced to move out in search of water. That's when we see an increase in injuries, conflict, and distress – most of which are preventable," said Col. Navaz Shariff, Chief Wildlife Veterinarian, PfA Wildlife Hospital.

It added that Operation Quench Thirst focuses on replenishing critical water sources inside Turahalli forest through daily water tanker deployments and installation of water troughs, which have been strategically installed across Turahalli and KB Kaval forest ranges, while also refilling and sustaining existing natural water sources within the forest ecosystem.

The initiative is carried out in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department and with support from the citizens of Bengaluru.

"Providing water within the forest is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect wildlife and reduce conflict with humans," Dr. Shariff said.

The forest supports a rich diversity of species including leopards, spotted deer, wild boars, golden jackals, mongooses, hares and peafowl, along with birds such as owls, barbets, cuckoos, babblers and white-rumped shama, and several snake species.

PfA added that it continues to receive multiple rescue calls daily for dehydrated animals and birds, further underlining the urgent need for sustained water support both inside forests and across urban spaces.

HC refuses to quash rape case against government school teacher

The Hindu Bureau

The High Court of Karnataka refused to quash a rape case against a 47-year-old government school teacher for allegedly raping a guest teacher repeatedly for over a year by threatening to leak her private photographs and get her removed from her job if she did not cooperate with him and disclosed his conduct.

The allegations made in the complaint and the charge sheet depict "not consent but submission extracted under duress" and that the petitioner must face a full-fledged trial, said Justice M. Nagaprasanna while rejecting the contention of petitioner, who had claimed that the alleged sexual acts were consensual in nature.

The incident
According to the complaint, the petitioner developed an acquaintance with the survivor, who had joined as a guest teacher in 2023. Initially, he used to summon her to the office room, close windows, and allegedly sexually abuse her and then threaten her. After some time, he compelled her to send her private photos through phone by threatening that he would get her removed from the job through the Block Education Officer if she refused.

Later, he had allegedly sexually assaulted her multiple times at school, at her home, and at other places by blackmailing her that he would release her photos on social media if she failed to cooperate.

The survivor said that she tolerated sexual assaults, and hid them from her husband and children due to fear of losing her job, as her salary of ₹10,000 per month was important for her family. Finally, she disclosed the petitioner's conduct to her husband, on whose instruction she called the petitioner to the house where her husband and brother caught the petitioner in an objectionable manner on the bed.

It was claimed in the complaint that the petitioner gave a written assurance to her husband not to approach the victim again and subsequently, the victim suffered depression and underwent psychiatric treatment.

She lodged the complaint with the police in 2024 as the petitioner made attempts to force her again, as he had become the in-charge head of the school.

"The complaint narrates, in vivid and distressing detail, how the petitioner allegedly exploited asymmetry of power, first by displaying or capturing objetionable images, then by threatening dissemination and thereafter, coercing sexual favours under the twin spectres of professional ruin and public humiliation," the court said while making it clear that its observations would not influence further proceedings before the trial court.

Govt. urged to allow mutual transfers for police personnel

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Police Complaints Authority (SPCA) has written to the State government, urging it to permit mutual transfers of eligible police personnel across districts.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister and the Director-General and Inspector-General of Police, Karnataka, a member of the SPCA, Mohan Kumar Danappa, highlighted the concerns of police constables serving in Civil, CAR (City Armed Reserve), and DAR (District Armed Reserve) units.

He pointed out that while the Karnataka State Police (Transfer) Special Rules, 2022 allows transfers under certain conditions, the provision for mutual transfers between personnel has been discontinued.

He emphasised that allowing mutual transfers would not create vacancies, as it only involves the exchange of postings between two willing personnel.

Timings
BENGALURU

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 18	
RISE 06:25	SET 18:30
RISE 05:44	SET 17:57
THURSDAY, MAR. 19	
RISE 06:24	SET 18:30
RISE 06:23	SET 18:51
FRIDAY, MAR. 20	
RISE 06:24	SET 18:30
RISE 07:05	SET 19:47

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	20
Mysuru	35	20
Bengaluru	33	22

Bengaluru Today
33°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
33°C Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be warm. Night also will be slight cool.

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THE HINDU
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BUSINESS CONNECT
A Business Initiative

Ranbir Kapoor Joins Mana Projects as Brand Ambassador as Bengaluru Developer Unveils Renewed Brand Vision

Ranbir Kapoor joins Mana Projects as brand ambassador as the company unveils a refreshed identity focused on design-led, sustainable living. The new vision emphasizes integrating space, nature and innovation to create meaningful residential communities for modern urban homebuyers. Based in Bengaluru, the developer aims to align with evolving lifestyles through thoughtfully designed, eco-conscious and future-ready housing developments. Speaking on the milestone, D. Kishore Reddy, Chairman and Managing Director, Mana Projects said the rebranding reflects Mana Projects' shift toward serving modern, millennial homebuyers who value smart design, community living, and a connection to nature. He emphasized the company's focus on purposeful spaces, sustainability, and quality engineering, with their partnership with Ranbir Kapoor symbolizing this new phase of building thoughtful, future-ready communities. Ranbir Kapoor said that a home is a deeply meaningful investment that should offer comfort and belonging. He praised Mana Projects for thoughtfully blending design, nature, and functionality, and expressed happiness about partnering with them to create inspiring homes for modern urban families.

BEL receives orders worth Rs.1011 Crore

Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has secured additional orders worth Rs.1011 Crore since the last disclosure on 25th February 2026. Major orders received include communication equipment, radar warning and jamming system, fire control system, electro optic sight, fire detection & warning system for fighter aircraft, high energy laser, automatic train supervision system, head-up display, software solutions, jammers, shelters, strategic components, upgrades, spares, services, etc.

Bank of Baroda Becomes First Bank in India to Raise Green Infrastructure Bond in Domestic Market

Bank of Baroda has raised ₹10,000 crore through its Series I long-term green infrastructure bonds, becoming the first Indian bank to issue domestic green bonds. The issue saw strong demand, with bids of ₹16,415 crore against a base size of ₹5,000 crore, and was priced at a competitive 7.10% coupon despite market volatility. The bank achieved favorable pricing ("greenium") due to strong investor confidence and its ESG focus. Proceeds will fund renewable energy and other sustainable infrastructure projects in line with its green financing framework. Rated AAA (Stable) by CARE and ICRA, the bonds mark a key milestone for both the bank and India's ESG bond market. For more details visit Visit at https://bankofbaroda.bank.in/

The Bureau of Indian Standards Bengaluru Organized "Manak Manthan" on IS 19469:2025 to Enhance Consumer Confidence in the Diamond Industry

Recently The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Bengaluru Branch, held a "Manak Manthan" discussion in Peenya, Bengaluru, focusing on IS 19469:2025 for diamond industry transparency. The session, led by Premlata Sinha, Scientist-D / Joint Director highlighted standards for disclosure, traceability, and ethical practices across natural, treated, and lab-grown diamonds. Stakeholders discussed compliance, documentation, and implementation challenges, with the event emphasizing consumer trust and BIS's commitment to quality and stakeholder engagement. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks, reaffirming BIS's commitment to stakeholder engagement and awareness initiatives aimed at promoting quality, transparency, and consumer protection through Indian Standards.

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Place: Bangalore | Date : 18.03.2026 **Circle Head | Bangalore Circle**

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

BIRTH CENTENARY

CENTENARY BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

JOHN SANTIAGO
Retd. Proof Reader, THE HINDU
Born: 18-03-1926 Died: 13-11-1991

Dear Dad!
I remember you every day and continuing my life on the path you showed me. Despite many troubles and obstacles, I am leading my journey with your blessings. A tribute from your loving son
J. SEBASTEEN (THE HINDU) & Family

DEATH

R RAMASUBRAMANIAN(67), Retired Assistant Vice President (Electronics), The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 17-03-2026. Address: 4B, Yamunai, GRN Jeevan Bheema Enclave, 12, Rajasekaran Street, Mylapore, Chennai-600004. Contact: 9841053664

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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‘Rampant corruption in approving building plans, issuing e-khatas’

BJP member says a bribe of ₹100 per sq. ft is being collected for approving apartment construction in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP members representing Bengaluru on Tuesday alleged rampant corruption in approving building plans, issuance of e-khatas, construction of retaining walls along storm-water drains (rajakaluves), and property tax collection by civic bodies under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly on the city’s deteriorating infrastructure, senior BJP member Satish Reddy, representing Bommanahalli, swore on Mahatma Gandhi and alleged that a bribe of ₹100 per sq. ft was being collected for approving residential apartment construction in Bengaluru.

“A bribe of ₹100 per sq ft is being collected for building plan approvals. The Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA) charges ₹20 less. Let any member say there is no corruption. Who gets this money - officials, the government, or someone else?” Mr. Reddy asked.

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok speaking during the Assembly session in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Congress member Sharath Bache Gowda intervened, objecting to the allegation and demanding evidence.

Mr. Reddy maintained that corruption at every stage of construction had adversely impacted the sector and even rendered workers jobless. He alleged that building plan approval fees had been increased fourfold and that no e-khata was issued without bribes.

He further claimed that GBA officials are using drones for property surveys and collecting taxes even during the construction stage, while allegedly ignoring large commercial establishments such as malls.

He also accused the authorities of not holding meetings with city MLAs. “I am ready to quit if proven wrong. I am speaking the truth,” he asserted.

Mr. Reddy additionally accused the Congress government of “cheating” Muslim voters, alleging that ward delimitation had been carried out in a manner that divided Muslim populations across constituencies. “Muslims are voting for the Congress not out of affection but owing to the lack of an alternative,” he said.

BJP member Munirathna (R.R. Nagar) alleged that a ₹3,500-crore World Bank loan for flood management and storm-water drain construction was obtained using “misleading information.”

He also questioned the renaming of institutions such as Victoria Hospital (after Shantaveri Gopala Gowda) and Bengaluru University (after Manmohan Singh).

Tunnel Road project

BJP member S.R. Vishwanath (Yelahanka) strongly opposed the proposed 17-km tunnel road project, alleging that it would destroy parks and green cover while benefiting private developers.

He stated that each kilometre of the tunnel would cost ₹1,007 crore, and commuters would be charged a toll of ₹19 per km – amounting to ₹323 for a one-way trip.

“The government has no funds to fix potholes, repair roads, or manage garbage but is pushing costly tunnel and infrastructure projects,” he said.

He also criticised the steep increase in garbage cess, claiming that apartment associations are being charged ₹12 per kg for waste collection.

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok said the GBA had failed to decongest traffic at Goraguntepalya junction on Tumakuru Road, one of the city’s busiest corridors. He urged the Chief Minister not to approve a proposed large commercial complex in the area and instead utilise the land to widen roads and ease traffic congestion.

Govt. plans new Excise Act to curb illegal sale of liquor

IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur informed the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday that the government is considering revising the Karnataka Excise Act, 1965, and introducing a new law to curb the illegal sale of liquor.

The Minister also said the government is examining the possibility of bringing illegal liquor sales under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

A file photo of liquor that was seized. Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur has acknowledged that liquor is being sold illegally in grocery stores in Raichur district.

In grocery stores

Replying to a question by Basanagouda Daddal (Congress), Mr. Thimmapur acknowledged that liquor is being sold illegally in grocery stores in Raichur district. He noted that action had not been adequately taken under the existing provisions of the Excise Act and stressed the need for stricter enforcement. He suggested forming special squads in Raichur and Yadgir districts to crack down on illegal liquor sales.

On highways

The Minister stated that the Excise Department has been conducting continuous patrols to curb irregularities. Regular inspections are being carried out on national and State highways.

At the district level, standing committee meetings are being held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner, and necessary measures are being taken to control violations.

Mr. Thimmapur added that cases have been registered against those involved in the illegal manufacture and sale of liquor.

Redeployment of specialist doctors done to reduce neonatal mortality: Dinesh

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Tuesday said that redeployment of gynaecologists and anaesthetists from community health centres (CHCs) in rural areas with lesser deliveries to taluk hospitals was done in an effort to reduce neonatal deaths after an audit of neonatal deaths in different areas of the State.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao speaking in the Assembly session in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Replying to a debate on issues related to the Health Department in the Assembly, the Minister sought to allay fears that redeployment of gynaecologists and anaesthetists from CHCs to taluk hospitals would affect the rural health sector, as alleged by the Opposition.

“The audit into neonatal deaths pointed towards a lack of availability of such specialists in taluk hospitals. It also threw light on the fact that these specialists did not have much work in the CHCs. Hence, the government took up the initiative to upgrade the taluk hospitals to the level of district hospitals by ensuring round-the-clock availability of such specialists in taluk hospitals,” he explained.

“We have evolved a protocol as per which the taluk hospitals should ensure round-the-clock availability of two gynaecologists, two anaesthetists, two paediatricians, and a radiologist,” he explained.

He sought to downplay fears of the PHCs work getting affected by pointing out that two doctors with MBBS qualification were being deployed in place of specialists who were moved out from CHCs. He argued that in case of complications, people could always reach the taluk hospitals.

The neonatal mortality rate (NMR) that stood at 62 in the State in 2022-23 had reduced to 59 in 2023-24 and 57 in 2024-25 and 48 so far in the present year, the Minister said. The government had set a target of reducing it further to 38 by 2028, he noted.

Refuting allegations that rural health needs had been ignored, the Minister maintained that as against the norms that there should be a primary health centre for a population of 20,000 to 30,000, 97 PHCs in Karnataka had a population of around 5,000 under them. Similarly, 372 PHCs had a population coverage of 5,000 to 10,000, he pointed out.

However, not satisfied by the Minister’s reply, the Opposition members staged a walkout

‘There are some problems in supply of certain drugs only at PHCs’

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Acknowledging that there were some problems related to the supply of certain medicines at primary health centres (PHC) in the State, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Tuesday, however, told the Legislative Council that the drugs were not in short supply at State-run hospitals at the district and the taluk level.

Of the 890 drugs to be supplied, the Minister told the Council that 534 would be procured through bidding, of which purchase orders had been given for 232 drugs. Another 356 would be procured locally.

Over the last two months, hospitals have been asked to procure drugs locally.

Drugs were available under AB-ARK and ₹20 crore had been set aside for its purchase. “During the transition phase, we have asked hospitals to buy drugs locally and have given them money. In the transition phase, drugs worth ₹270 crore have been supplied.”

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has said that the process of drug procurement is being streamlined. FILE PHOTO

Drugs are available at taluk and district hospitals while some problems have been reported in primary health centres, he added.

Stating that the process of drug procurement is being streamlined, Mr. Rao said that officials were visiting pharma production sites to ascertain the capacity of the producer to supply the requisite drugs. The new tender process allows entry of newcomers since the previous tender clause of “past performance” that kept away many newcomers had been done away with, and staggered supply instead of yearly stock had been introduced, he added.

In the Assembly, Mr. Rao insisted that there was no shortage of drugs. However, the department was in the process of reforming the procurement of drugs and operation of Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation (KSMSCL).

In this transition phase, there could have been some problems, the Minister maintained.

The Minister explained that here will be a month quarantine period after procuring drugs. During this period, the drugs would be subjected to quality tests before being given to hospitals, he explained.

Vishwanath questions ‘excessive’ expenditure on Chief Minister’s travel, security

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP member H. Vishwanath on Tuesday questioned what he described as “excessive” and avoidable expenditure by the State government on security and travel arrangements for the Chief Minister and Ministers.

Participating in a discussion on the Budget in the Legislative Council, Mr. Vishwanath asked whether public money collected through taxes could be spent so freely.

Trips to Mysuru

He pointed out that Mysuru is about 120 km from Bengaluru and can be reached within an hour with an escort, but the Chief Minister was opting for special aircraft on a regular basis. He alleged that about ₹38 crore had been spent so far on such travel, with each trip costing around ₹6.5 lakh. He also referred to the use of special aircraft for shorter distances, including travel from Mysuru to Hunsur, and for trips to Delhi.

A file photo of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah alighting from a helicopter. H. Vishwanath, BJP MLC, has referred to the use of special aircraft for shorter distances. FILE PHOTO

Drawing a comparison, Mr. Vishwanath said that even industrialist Narayana Murthy and his wife Sudha Murty travel by commercial flights, and questioned whether Karnataka was in a position to bear such expenditure.

He also raised concerns over security arrangements, questioning the need for what he termed as “expensive” protection. Referring to the number of Ministers and officials with Cabinet-rank status, he said there were 33 Ministers and several others - around 149 persons in total - enjoying such facilities, leading to additional expenditure. He questioned whether such levels of security, including Z-category cover for some, were necessary.

“The Congress government has spent nearly ₹532 crore on advertisements over the past two years. This could have been used for development and welfare programmes,” he said.

Alleging that the State was witnessing financial strain, with rising debt and delays in implementation of programmes, he said there was a shortage of nearly 2 lakh government employees and asked how development could be carried out without adequate staff.

Finance Minister post

He suggested that the State appoint a separate Finance Minister, arguing that the responsibility required dedicated attention to ensure the presentation of a sound Budget. The remarks led to interruptions from members of the Treasury Benches. Congress Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed said that similar practices were followed during the BJP’s tenure as well.

Members on the Treasury Benches maintained that official travel and related expenditure were part of governance and public outreach.

SC/ST commission holds deliberations amid confusion over internal reservation

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The meeting had been convened to deliberate on internal reservation for Scheduled Castes in the light of the Supreme Court’s directives regarding reservation policy

Amid confusion over the internal reservation among Scheduled Castes, and reduction of overall reservation to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from 56% to 50% for recruitment to 56,432 posts, the Karnataka State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes held deliberations with senior officials, former KPSC functionaries, and community representatives on Tuesday.

Besides discussion on internal reservation, commission chairman L. Murthy elicited responses from the community representatives on varied issues.

A note said that the meeting had been convened to deliberate on internal reservations for Scheduled Castes in the light of the Supreme Court’s directives regarding reservation policy.

“We highlighted the need to remove confusion that is leading to bogus caste certificates pertaining to Bhovi and Maleyaru. With the SC reservation basket being crowded already, the commission was also urged not to consider/recommend the addition of four more castes, including Kembattis and Mansas, as recommended by the H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission,” a source, who attended the meeting, told *The Hindu*.

The demand to delete Adi Karnatakas, Adi Dravidas, and Adi Andhras, which are groups of castes, was made, and the commission was urged to write to the Centre recommending their deletion since they have now been allowed to opt between Category A (Madigas) or Category B (Holeyas), sources said.

50% cap

Further, sources said that it conveyed to the commission that breaching the 50% cap on reservation in Karnataka’s case was valid since the population of SC/ST in Karnataka is about 25%, and that the cap, as per the Supreme Court, was not a watertight one.

Among those present were Social Welfare Secretary D. Randeep, DPAR Secretary K. Jagadish, Law Secretary K.L. Ashok, Higher Education Secretary Khushboo Goel Chowdhary, former KPSC Chairman Gonal Bheemappa and a host of former KPSC members.

Congress unveils first list for Kerala Assembly polls

Party names candidates for 55 seats after hectic talks; Opposition leader Satheesan, ex-Minister Chennithala and 19 MLAs included in list; party yet to take a call on MPs who are keen to contest

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A Congress road show in Kozhikode city on Tuesday. At right, workers sort posters in Kannur. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT/S.K. MOHAN

Forty-eight hours after the Election Commission announced the schedule for the Assembly election in Kerala, the Congress announced its candidates for 55 seats on Tuesday.

The election to the 140-member Assembly will be held on April 9.

All India Congress Committee general secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal announced the first list in the evening after several hours of hectic talks, especially regarding the demands of some MPs who have expressed the desire to contest.

Notably, the party has not yet named candidates for the Kannur and Konni seats for which MPs K. Sudhakaran and Adoor Prakash respectively raised demands. Mr. Venugopal said the party would take a decision on the MPs later.

The Congress is expected to contest in a couple of seats more than the 93 it contested in 2021, when the party-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won 41 seats.

Key contestants

The list includes 20 incumbent MLAs. Among the prominent faces are Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan from the Paravur constituency, former Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala from Haripad, KPCC president Sunny Joseph from Peravur, former MP K. Muraleedharan from Vattiyurkavu, and Chandy Oommen from Puthuppally. Among the new faces is Youth Congress president O.J. Janeesh, who will contest from Kodungalloor.

A. Suresh, a personal assistant to the former Chief Minister and CPI(M) leader V.S. Achuthanandan, has been fielded from Malampuzha. Mr. Suresh formally joined the Congress on Tuesday, after accusing the CPI(M) of having lost its ideological character.

Actor Ramesh Pisharody has been fielded from the Palakkad constituency, which was previously won by Rahul Mamkootathil, who was suspended from the Congress following rape allegations.

NMC slaps ₹1 cr. penalty on private medical college in Bengaluru

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

A private medical college at Devanahalli in Bengaluru has been fined ₹1 crore by the National Medical Commission (NMC) over non-disclosure and payment of stipends to MBBS interns and postgraduate residents.

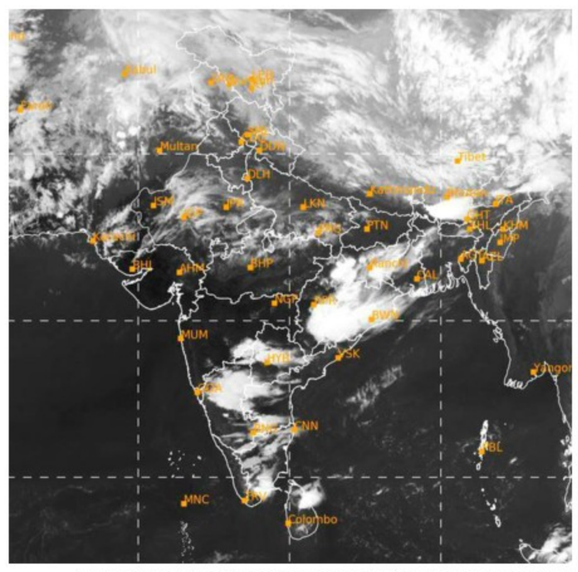
Seven private medical colleges have been fined by the NMC for the same reason. Akash Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Devanahalli, is the only college from the State to be fined. The remaining six colleges are in Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. Following Supreme Court orders in multiple cases, the NMC, on July 11, 2025, issued a public notice directing all medical colleges and institutions across the country to disclose on their official websites the stipend being paid to MBBS interns and postgraduate medical residents, as mandated under the applicable regulations, and to ensure transparency and uniformity in the payment of stipend.

However, these seven colleges, on which the NMC has now imposed a penalty, have not followed these directions despite repeated reminders, sources said. "The non-compliance with the above-mentioned requirements attracts regulatory actions under Clause 30 and 31 of the establishment of Medical Institutions, Assessment and Rating Regulations, 2023 and Post-Graduate Medical Education Regulations (PGMER), 2023, and the Maintenance of Standards of Medical Education Regulations, 2023," the NMC notice said.

Further, it stated that the continuing non-compliance with the mandate shall attract further regulatory and penal actions, including but not limited to restrictions on admissions. "Suspension of permissions, or other disciplinary measures will be taken," it warned.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	32.8	19.5	Kozhikode	—	35.4	25.8
Ahmedabad	—	36.7	22.8	Kurnool	—	37.0	25.0
Aizawl	35	31.5	12.9	Lucknow	—	35.1	18.2
Allahabad	—	37.5	18.8	Madurai	—	37.0	26.5
Bengaluru	—	32.3	21.4	Mangaluru	—	33.1	21.7
Bhopal	—	35.2	17.8	Mumbai	—	31.1	22.1
Bhubaneswar	—	32.7	22.6	Mysuru	—	33.8	17.0
Chandigarh	—	29.0	12.1	New Delhi	—	31.6	15.8
Chennai	—	34.5	24.3	Patna	—	35.4	22.0
Coimbatore	—	34.9	23.2	Port Blair	—	32.4	26.1
Dehradun	—	29.6	14.5	Puducherry	—	32.0	24.7
Gangtok	2	19.7	10.5	Pune	—	37.2	19.8
Goa	—	33.5	24.0	Raipur	—	36.2	18.1
Guwahati	5	29.5	16.4	Ranchi	4	32.2	19.0
Hubballi	—	35.0	19.0	Shillong	11	21.3	8.6
Hyderabad	0.7	34.7	22.4	Shimla	5	18.6	8.0
Imphal	—	23.6	12.0	Srinagar	0.3	14.9	4.4
Jaipur	—	32.3	19.1	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.3	25.0
Kochi	0.2	31.8	25.8	Tiruchi	—	36.7	25.4
Kohima	—	22.0	12.0	Vijayawada	—	34.7	23.0
Kolkata	9	32.8	19.6	Visakhapatnam	—	32.4	24.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.89	.87	.21	136	105	
Bengaluru	4	.16	.36	132	143	
Chennai	.17	.10	.43	21	50	
Delhi	.17	.78	109	202	160	
Hyderabad	2	.11	.59	60	82	
Kolkata	5	.50	.33	32	41	
Lucknow	.14	.40	.33	111	147	
Mumbai	.15	.73	.10	45	114	
Pune	—	.77	.57	66	106	
Visakhapatnam	.27	.49	.14	33	91	

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

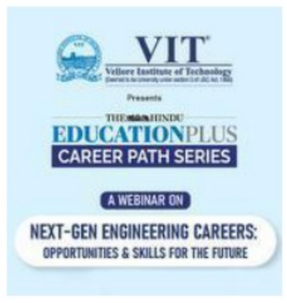
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 247 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Madikeri, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Webinar on engineering careers to be held on March 20



The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

As part of the Career Path Series, the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore, in collaboration with The Hindu Education Plus will hold a webinar on "Next-Gen Engineering Careers: Opportunities & Skills for the Future" on March 20 at 4 p.m.

The webinar aims to provide students with valuable insights into emerging engineering domains, skills sought by employers, and how aspiring engineers can prepare themselves for future-ready careers. In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, the session will offer practical guidance to help students navigate career opportunities and stay ahead in a competitive global environment.

Participants will also gain perspectives on industry expectations, career pathways, internship opportunities, and the growing importance of interdisciplinary skills, shared by leading academic and industry experts. The panel will have Sandhya Pentareddy, executive director, VIT, Vellore; Samuel Rajkumar, director – career development centre, VIT, Vellore; and Pavan Desiraju, head - human resources, SanDisk. The session will be moderated by journalist Soma Basu.

To register for the webinar, visit https://newsth.live/THVITNGE or scan the QR code.

कृषि विश्वविद्यालय, जोधपुर
जोधपुर 342304, राजस्थान, भारत

ई-निविदा 32/2025-26

कृषि विश्वविद्यालय, जोधपुर द्वारा Farm Machinery for CoA CDFT & ARSS Samdari की खरीद के लिए ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा संबंधी विस्तृत विवरण एवं जानकारी www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in एवं https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है। UBN NO. : JAU2526GLOB00240
EPROC ID: 2026_AGUJD_546082_1
राज.संवाद/सी/25/22665
नियंत्रक (वित्त)

ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೆದ್ದಾರಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ
ಮುಖ್ಯ ಯೋಜನಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯವರ ಕಛೇರಿ,
ಯೋಜನಾ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನ ಘಟಕ, ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೆದ್ದಾರಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ,
ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಪೂರಕ ಕಟ್ಟಡ, ಕೆ.ಆರ್.ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-560001.
ದೂರವಾಣಿ: 080-22224106 ಇ-ಮೇಲ್: cposhdp2020@gmail.com
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಮುಯೋಅ/ಯೋಅಫ/ರಾಹೆಅಯೋ/ಖಾವಾ/ಕಾಇಂ-02/ಸಕಾಇಂ-03/2025-26/2897 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 17.03.2026
ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ-04/2025-26 (ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ)
ಮುಖ್ಯ ಯೋಜನಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಯೋಜನಾ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನ ಘಟಕ, ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೆದ್ದಾರಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ, ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಅನೆಕ್ಸ್ ಕಟ್ಟಡ, ನೆಲಮಹಡಿ, ಕೆ.ಆರ್.ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-560001 ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿಗೆ 07 ವಾಹನ (ಕಾರು)ಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ ಮಾಸಿಕ ದರ ಬಾಡಿಗೆ ಆಧಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಒದಗಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಕರೆಯಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, (1) ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳನ್ನು ದಿನಾಂಕ: 18.03.2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 5.00 ಗಂಟೆಯಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. (2) ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ: 01.04.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 04.30 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ. (3) ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ: 04.04.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 05.00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ. (4) ಅರ್ಹ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ: 12.04.2026 ಬೆಳಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯನ್ನು ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.
ಸಹಿ/-
ಅಧೀಕ್ಷಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರರು, ಯೋಜನಾ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನ ಘಟಕ,
ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೆದ್ದಾರಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆ, ಕೆ.ಆರ್. ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು.
DIPR/CP/6324/SMCL/2025-26

Advt. 02/2026
Inviting applications for the post of Chief Executive Officer, NBQP
Established as a National Body for accreditation and quality promotion through a Cabinet decision, Quality Council of India (QCI) is an autonomous body that plays a pivotal role at the national level in propagating, adopting and adhering to quality standards in all sectors across manufacturing, trade and services. The Department for Promotion of industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India is the nodal point for QCI.
QCI invites online applications for one (01) position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in National Board for Quality Promotion (NBQP). The details are available at: **https://qcin.org/careers.**
Note: -
i. Mode of submission: Online, only online applications will be accepted. Last date of submission of online applications is: 09.04.2026, 05:30 pm.
ii. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.
iii. QCI reserves the right to cancel/withdraw/amend the advertisement without assigning any reasons.
Sd/-
Deputy Director, HR & Admin.
QCI'S BOARDS AND DIVISIONS
Quality Council of India, World Trade Center, J-200, Block J, Narouji Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi- 110029

BANGALORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
T.Chowdaiah Road, Kumarapark West, Bangalore-560 020
No. BDA/EE-NPKL/Work_TN-02/2025-26 Date: 17.03.2026
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Item Rate Tender under Two Cover System)
(Through GoK e-Procurement platform https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)
On behalf of the Commissioner, BDA, Bengaluru, The Executive Engineer, NPKL Division, BDA, Bengaluru invites Item Rate Tenders in two tender document system from eligible Tenderers for the work of **"Construction of Sub-Surface Drain in Block-1 Sector-L and Block-2 Sector H at Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout Bengaluru"** Indent No. **BDA/2025-26/OW/ WORK_INDENT230.** Approx cost put to tender: **Rs. 464.25 Lakhs.** EMD: **Rs. 6.96 Lakhs** (Rs. 1.00 lakh will be as per e-Procurement Portal & Balance amount is in the form of Bank Guarantee). Last date for receipt of Tenders: **31.03.2026 up to 16.00 Hrs.** Time for Completion: **06 Months (Including Monsoon).** For further details kindly log on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or contact e-procurement helpline 080 22371090/ 22340060. Helpline/ Whatsapp: 9483166622 (24x7) @BDAOfficialGok
Sd/- Executive Engineer, NKPL Division, BDA, Bengaluru

Government of Karnataka
Office of the Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation And Ground Water Development Division, Ballari
IFT No. EE/MI & GWDD/Bly/AE-1/2025-26/2384
Date :16.03.2026
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (KW-3)
On behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka the Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation and Ground Water Development Division Ballari invited the tender for the work of under **Head of Account 4702 Plan** work in Vijayanagar Dist., H.B.Halli taluk **01** Work in **Two Cover System Estimated amount put to tender is Rs.55.01 lakhs,** the tenderers should download and submitt the tenders from **date : 16.03.2026 to 23.03.2026 upto 17.30 hours. Date & Time of opening Technical Bid is on 25.03.2026 at 11.00 hours. Opening of Financial Bid is on 27.03.2026 at 11.00 hours**. Any other information should get by login the website **"KPPP"** website http:// kppp.karnataka.gov.in
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
M.I. & G.W.D. Division, Ballari.
DIPR/Ballari/1149/KSMCA/2025-26

KALYAN KARNATAKA ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION VIJAYAPUR DIVISION
NO:KKRTC:VJP:TR:COMM:3776:2025-26 Dated:14.03.2026
E-Tender Publication [No:10/2026]
Vijayapur Division invited E-Tender(Through E-Procurement) for Commercial Shops, Refreshment Rooms, Open Space of Various Bus Stands Comes under this Division Detailed tender schedule is as below.
1) Last Date for submitting online application: **15.04.2026** at 17.28 PM.
2) E-Tender Opening **Date :17.04.2026** at 10.00 am onward
For details visit https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in or Contact D.T.O :7760992252 or Commercial Case Worker (Traffic Section) @ KKRTC, Divisional Office Vijayapur during office hours.
Sd/- Divisional Controller,
K.K.R.T.C Vijayapur Division.
ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಿಜಯಪುರ/815/ಕೆಎಸ್‌ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025-26

STATE BANK OF INDIA
Premises & Estate Dept, Local Head Office
8th Floor, Gandhi Maidan, Patna-800001
E-mail: agmpe.lhopat@sbi.co.in, Phone No.: 0612-2820818
NOTICE FOR EMPANELMENT
TENDER IDs: LHOPAT/P&E/2025-26/001, LHOPAT/P&E/2025-26/002, LHOPAT/P&E/2025-26/003, LHOPAT/P&E/2025-26/004
State Bank of India, Patna Circle invites applications for empanelment of Firm/Agency for SITC & AMC of "Automatic Fire Detection & Alarm System", "Fire Extinguishers", "Fire Resistance Doors" and "Fire Suppression System (Water Based)". Application Forms, eligibility criteria and other details are available on **Bank's website https://sbi.bank.in under 'SBI in the News' > 'Procurement News' OR SBI e-tender portal https://www.tenderwizard.com/SBIETENDER.** The e-tender can be downloaded from 10.03.2026 to 06.04.2026 upto 3:00 PM. The addendum/corrigendum, if any will be published in the Bank's website only.
Place: Patna
Assistant General Manager (Premises & Estate)

High Court of Karnataka
High Court Buildings, Bengaluru-560 001
No. HCRB/ACS-1/2026 (RPC) Date: 16.03.2026
No. HCRB/ACS-2/2026 (KKR)
BRIEF NOTIFICATION
Online applications are invited by High Court of Karnataka for **filling up of 70 posts of Assistant Court Secretary (59 posts under Residual Parent Cadre including 06 backlog post and 11 posts under Kalyana Karnataka Region including 07 backlog posts).** Pay scale of the said Post is **Rs. 44,900/- Rs. 1,42,400/-.** The Last date for submission of online application is **15th April, 2026 till 11.59 p.m.**
Eligible candidates are required to apply only through 'Online' by visiting the official website of High Court of Karnataka at **www.judiciary.karnataka.gov.in** No other means/mode of applications will be accepted. The Notification and other details are available in the above mentioned portal and in the official Gazette (e-Gazette) of Karnataka **dated: 16.03.2026**
Sd/- (K.S. Bharath Kumar)
Registrar General,
High Court of Karnataka,
DIPR/DD-C.P/6313/KSMCA/2025-26 Bengaluru

KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)
CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919
ABSTRACT BID NOTIFICATION
(TWO COVER SYSTEM) (Through KPP Portal Only)
1) Tender No. KPCL/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT4051 Date: 11.03.2026 for Design, Manufacture, Testing, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Transformer Monitoring Equipment conforming to KPCL Technical Specification for various KPCL Power Stations.
2) Tender No. KPCL/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT4052 Date: 11.03.2026 for Design, Manufacture, Testing, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of 8 Nos. of Online Partial Discharge Monitoring System (PDMS) **for Generators of RTPS Project** confirming to KPCL Technical Specifications. Last date for receipt of tenders: For Sl. No. 1 & 2: **15.04.2026 at 17.00 Hrs.** Further details can be had from **Chief Engineer (Thermal Designs)**, KPCL, No. 3, (Green Building), 2nd Floor, Behind Drug Controller Office Premises, Palace Road, Bengaluru-560001, **E-mail:** kpclcetd@gmail.com ; cetdkpcl@karnataka.gov.in **Mobile:** For Sl. No. 1: 94806 82537/79752 00519 (Exe.Engr Ele-2). For Sl. No. 2: 99724 88569/94495 96527 (Exe.Engr Ele-3). **Website:** https://kpcl.karnataka.gov.in
TENDER NOTIFICATION
3) Tender No. KPCL/2025-26/DA/WORK_INDENT4045 Date: 10.03.2026 Shotcreting to U/s face, deep pointing to D/s face & Drilling and grouting to Reach-I from Ch 150 ft to 1100 ft of Linganamakki Dam. **EMD: Rs.15.00 Lakhs.**
4) Tender No. KPCL/2025-26/DA/WORK_INDENT4048 Date: 10.03.2026 Shotcreting to U/s face, deep pointing to D/s face & Drilling and grouting to Reach-III from Ch 3130 ft to 4500 ft of Linganamakki Dam. **EMD: Rs.16.89 Lakhs**. Class of Contractor: For Sl. No. 3 & 4: **KPWD Class-I.** Last date and time for submission of bid: For Sl. No. 3 & 4: **09.04.2026 upto 17.00 Hrs.** Further details can be had from **Chief Engineer (Civil Design),** during office hours. Mobile: 91416 09164.

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME
I, Service No. JC 624795P, Rank: SUB, Name Man Bahadurur Gurung (presently posted Unit 4/8, Gorkha Rifle, D Coy, Pin 910204, C/o, 56 APO) have changed my minor son's name from Sonnaman Gurung to Naman Gurung vide affidavit dated 17.03.2026 before Notary A.R.Muneer Ahmed Bengaluru.
BUSINESS OFFERS
INVESTOR/PARTNER REQ 20Language OTT&Film Distribution Proj. 8148188460

PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME
I, APARNA Kondaveti, W/o. Arun Kumar Chelikani, R/o: S8 Sri Reddy Apt, Bellandur Gate, Sarjapura Road, Bellandur, Blr - 560103. Have changed my name as Aparna Chelikani.
I, Preetham S/O, S Jagannatha Shettigar R/o 6-105/3, 6d, Kodical, Mangaluru, Dakshina Kannada- 575006 have changed my name to Preetham Shettigar.

Nothing at all

The Centre must negotiate in good faith with Ladakhi leadership

Activist Sonam Wangchuk's release on March 14 ended a months-long legal and political standoff between his allies and Ladakh's leadership on one hand and the Centre on the other. Detaining him under the National Security Act 1980, the Centre alleged that he was the "chief provocateur" of the September 2025 violent clashes in Leh that left four dead, and dubbed his presence in the region a catalyst for an "Arab Spring-like" mobilisation to force its hand on Ladakh's constitutional status. The Centre also argued that given Ladakh's borders with China and Pakistan, continued "instigation" by a high-profile figure such as Wangchuk threatened territorial stability. About six months later, the Ministry of Home Affairs modified its order, intending to create an environment of "peace, stability, and mutual trust" and resume formal talks with the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA). But even as a judicial commission was still investigating the September violence, Wangchuk's legal team and his wife Gitanjali Angmo had successfully undermined the government's case. Foremost, the alleged evidence of incitement was a translation of a short speech padded with pages of "aspersions" – a legally dubious pattern seen in the Elgar Parishad, Delhi liquor scam, and G.N. Saibaba cases. His lawyers also pointed to Wangchuk's social media posts condemning the unrest that day.

The Supreme Court had also expressed serious concerns over Wangchuk's health in Jodhpur jail. His release came just three days before the Court's final hearing on the matter, letting the Ministry to avoid a potentially embarrassing ruling that could have deemed the detention arbitrary. But while Wangchuk's release has defused the immediate tension, the political situation remains fundamentally unresolved. Two days on, Leh saw massive rallies for the first time since September 2025, while Kargil observed a shutdown, with local leaders saying that the agitation for constitutional safeguards would continue. Talks between Ladakh bodies and the Ministry have however been inconclusive, with LAB and the KDA reiterating their demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule status – already recommended by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and promised in the BJP's 2020 election manifesto. Crucially, other activists, including Deldan Namgyal and Smanla Dorjey, remain in detention. In effect, what Wangchuk's detention was meant to serve is unclear, beyond allowing the Centre to brandish its heavy hand, worsening his health, and stalling negotiations. Unless the Centre can negotiate in good faith with the Ladakhi leadership and provide concrete timelines, the people of Ladakh will not get their due.

Prison outbreak

India's overcrowded jails pose a serious health risk to inmates

The public health crisis in India's prisons is distinguished by its poorer infrastructure and a general disregard for treating ailments until they become inconvenient. A prisoner does not lose the right to health, a point courts have repeatedly stressed; yet, between August 20, 2025, and March 9, 2026, around 92 inmates at the Jalpaiguri Central Correctional Home were infected with herpes simplex virus (HSV) and seven of them died. HSV is common in the general population but experts have said that in immunocompromised or overcrowded populations with poor care, it can lead to encephalitis, which is often fatal. The Home's 171% occupancy rate rendered good hygiene and isolation a luxury. According to the 2023 Prison Statistics of India, district prisons in West Bengal have reported occupancy rates exceeding 160% and certain facilities, such as the Kandi Sub-Jail, have historically reached staggering levels of over 400%. While the State has many foreign national inmates, overcrowding is a persistent fact of India's correctional facilities. In 2023, 30% of inmates in 10 prisons in Kerala were found to have skin diseases caused by humidity and a lack of personal space. A 2023 study in *The Lancet Public Health* found prisoners in India five times more likely to develop tuberculosis (TB) than the general population. In 2025, the Home Ministry ordered prison screening camps as unventilated environments allow TB to spread rapidly. The Nagpur and Indore central jails had major COVID-19 outbreaks.

According to the India Justice Report 2025, HIV prevalence among inmates is also significantly higher than the national average due to shared equipment and inadequate screening at entry. Mandatory, comprehensive medical screening could catch many of these infections before they become injurious, which also requires facilities to have the requisite personnel. But the report also flagged a 43% vacancy rate for medical officers, resulting in the number of inmates per doctor being 2.6 times higher than recommended by the Model Prison Manual. There are also only 25 psychologists for India's 5.7 lakh inmates. Filling this gap requires integrating prisons into the National Health Mission, ensuring a sufficient number of health workers trained to manage outbreaks, and enforcing the Manual's standards uniformly across States. As West Bengal's actions in 2020 illustrate – temporarily releasing thousands of undertrials to relieve overcrowding in the South 24 Parganas District Correctional Home and the Baruipur Central Jail – the solutions are not confined to health. The judiciary must fast-track cases involving undertrials, who constitute the majority of inmates, expand the use of bail and non-custodial alternatives for minor offences and expedite the repatriation of foreign nationals.

India's West Asia reset, more sinned against than sinning

Mahesh Sachdev

is a former Indian Ambassador with an interest in West Asia and oil matters

During the past month, Indian policy towards West Asia has stirred domestic controversy. As substantive Indian interests are at stake, a professional assessment, based on two trends, is offered without wading into the domestic political blame game.

A link to two trends

First, over the past decade, India has raised its diplomatic engagement with West Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made 15 visits to the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – some after a multi-decade hiatus. He also visited Israel twice, and the Palestinian Authority and Iran each once. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) have been signed with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, and similar negotiations are underway with the GCC and Israel.

With over $160 billion in bilateral trade and 10 million diaspora, the GCC ranks as India's largest socio-economic partner. Last decade's engagements spurred synergy, although the promised investments have lagged. India's political gains include a de-hyphenation with Pakistan, greater strategic convergence with stronger defence and security tie-ups and growing acceptance of India as a responsible and friendly status quo power.

Second, the Gulf monarchies' ardour for a foreign power is normally rooted in the foreign power's potential contribution to the security and stability of their royal family, state and region – in that order. Exceptional turmoil in West Asia since October 2023, and a three-week-old war with the GCC countries under direct Iranian drone and missile attacks and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have accentuated their search for a better security paradigm than the eight-decade-old regional Pax Americana.

The recent reset in India's diplomacy in West Asia largely acknowledges the aforementioned two trends and attempts to harness them to serve India's national interest. To their credit, India's policymakers have finally realised which side of the bread is buttered, and have launched a qualitative upscaling of a symbiosis with key West Asian countries. Recent initiatives, such as Mr. Modi's visit to Israel and his individual phone calls to all his GCC counterparts during the early days of the hostilities, have not only assured them of India's categorical support to their security and stability but also conveyed that India shares and prioritises their concerns at this critical juncture. Later, he also spoke with his Iranian counterpart.

The new doctrine is clearer-sighted and emphasises hard diplomacy. This reset is bereft of two traditional aspects that often dampen the bilateral amity: First, India did not chant the traditional please-all mantras that left all stakeholders partially satisfied and India at the margins of the arena. There was no attempt to "balance" its public policy on controversial issues such as the "two-state solution" and Iran's quest for nuclear technology. Second, India's statements reflected its views without needless third-party citations. This demonstrates India's growing confidence as a credible and autonomous power.

India needs balance, sensitivity and agility to leverage emerging opportunities in West Asia

Some domestic detractors have criticised the policy reset on multiple grounds. First, Mr. Modi's Israel visit (February 25-26) that concluded two days before Tel Aviv unleashed a military campaign against Iran is seen as untimely. Second, the perceived abandonment of India's traditional support for Palestinians and Iran is seen as immoral. Third, South Block is accused of surrendering India's sovereign autonomy to western dictates. Fourth, this activist reset may lead to strategic overreach with concomitant challenges such as exposure to security threats and costly defence tie-ups abroad.

The dates of the Prime Minister's visit to Israel were likely to have been set weeks in advance without any premonition of the February 28 offensive. The West Asian situation being perennially on the front burner makes any such visit risky, giving the ex-post facto criticism of the timing an unfair advantage of 50:50 hindsight. At the same time, the focus of the visit being bilateral renders it in a different domain.

Where other international actors stand

The perceived "immorality" of India's reset is largely misdirected and should be aimed at more worthy targets, such as China, Russia and Pakistan. Beijing siphoned off nearly 90% of the sanctioned Iranian oil exports, rendering only lip service to Tehran; Russia, which signed a 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty with Iran last year, has also underdelivered. And last year, Pakistani generals promised to nuke Israel if it attacked Iran; they are now U.S. President Donald Trump's favourites. Similarly, even the Arabs and Muslim states were conspicuously silent during the Gaza conflict.

While the Indian reset is a long-overdue recognition of the tectonic geopolitical shifts in West Asia, the pendulum swung to the other extreme and is being gradually realigned with national interests. The regional dynamic being notoriously mercurial, India should strive to keep its options more open. The Palestine Cause cannot be wished away forever. At the end of the day, Iran would remain an important player for India as an oil supplier and as a large market for Indian products, reconstruction projects and services. Iran, which borders Pakistan and Afghanistan, could be a strategic ally. Further, if subterranean trends such as growing Arab unease with the American and Israeli Armageddon, the Saudi-UAE rift, the Iraq-Iran estrangement, and aggressive positioning by Pakistan and Türkiye are taken on board, a more nuanced reset would have suitably underscored continuity and inclusion. In retrospect, India could have reacted faster to the developments, such as the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader and the appointment of his successor. Political correctness should not make India taciturn, as the diplomatic doublespeak offers many ways to skin the proverbial cat. India's relations with the U.S. and Israel are not so fragile as to be upended by our agreeing to disagree. Finally, India could have rendered more humanitarian relief to millions affected by the hostilities.

An opportunity for India

The ongoing reset should accommodate two incipient, but profound, regional movements with long-term positives for India. First, the long-standing "Oil-for-Security" compact between the Washington-led West and the moderate Arab regimes has become a collateral casualty of the ongoing U.S.-Israel war against Iran. The U.S. joined Israel in attacking Iran without prior notification to the GCC, ignoring the latter's cautionary advice. The West not only failed to protect them from Iranian retaliation, but its military bases on their soil became lightning rods for the Iranian attacks. Now, they fear that the U.S. may abruptly conclude the campaign, leaving them to face Iran's wrath. Once the dust settles, the GCC states may reduce their reliance on the U.S. and diversify their security partnership options to countries such as India, which are less likely to act as a Praetorian Guard. India's response to any such proposal ought to be based on a careful SWOT analysis with clear rules of engagement.

Second, the Iranian retaliations against the GCC have disrupted business activity and supply chains, and an early return to 'business as usual' appears unlikely. The GCC's appeal as an oasis of eco-political stability in the turbulent region has taken a serious long-term knock, leading to some stakeholders' clamour for a "GCC+1" strategy. India's eco-diplomacy must strive to position India as a viable and attractive alternative hub to the GCC's ritzy but fragile hotspots, which thrived by weaning away capital and talent from India. The current commotion is a historic opportunity to seize what is rightfully ours.

To remain relevant and effective, a country needs a dynamic foreign policy grounded in realism and national interest. Its execution requires the right mix of consistency, agility and modulation. As India's West Asia policy matures, it is relevant to recall British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston's maxim, "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual...."

A bit of a blur over India's new carbon credit plan

Arkalgud N. Ganeshamurthy

is Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), the Indian Society of Soil Science (ISSS), former Emeritus Scientist, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru, and former Dean, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, Manipur

A significant policy announcement in the Union Budget 2026, involving a massive ₹20,000 crore outlay for a carbon credit programme, has sparked a wave of confusion and conflicting reports, pitting a clear-cut governmental road map for heavy industry against a burgeoning narrative of a new income stream for India's farmers. At the heart of the debate is a fundamental question. Is this Budget allocation designed to fund Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) technologies for smokestack industries? Or is it a pioneering scheme to help farmers earn carbon credits through sustainable agriculture? Evidence from official documents suggests the first, but a persistent parallel narrative, echoed in several media reports, insists on the second.

The first is the CCUS for "Hard-to-Abate" Industries. The unambiguous anchor for the Budget announcement is the "R&D Roadmap for CCUS", released by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in December 2025. This technical document, which forms the basis of the budgetary provision, leaves little room for ambiguity regarding its scope and intent. The road map explicitly identifies its target sectors, power, steel, cement, refineries, and chemicals. These are labelled as "hard-to-abate" industries where process emissions are concentrated, measurable, and technically challenging to eliminate through renewable energy alone. The proposed ₹20,000 crore over five years is earmarked for large-scale deployment of CCUS technologies, essentially capturing carbon dioxide from factory flue gases and either using it industrially or storing it underground.

Not on the list

Crucially, agriculture is conspicuously absent from this list of CCUS sectors. The road map acknowledges agriculture as a source of greenhouse gases (primarily methane and nitrous oxide) but only in an inventory context. It explicitly excludes agriculture from CCUS strategies because agricultural emissions are diffuse, biologically mediated, and not suited to the point-source capture technology that defines CCUS. The road map draws a clear line between CCUS (preventing new industrial emissions) and Carbon Dioxide Removal or CDR (drawing down existing atmospheric CO_2), where agriculture, through soil carbon sequestration, biochar, and agroforestry, plays a starring role.

The strategy requires distinct focus on both 'smokestack' and 'soil' initiatives

The second is the persistent counter-narrative of farmers as climate solutionists. Despite this clear industrial focus, articles and social media discourse have propagated a different story. This narrative posits that the budgetary outlay will directly enable farmers to participate in carbon markets by adopting regenerative practices, turning "farms into climate solutions".

The root of the confusion

This interpretation appears to conflate two distinct concepts. The Budget's CCUS fund (for industrial carbon capture) and the broader, evolving voluntary carbon market in India, where agriculture and forestry projects are already beginning to generate credits for global and domestic buyers. Proponents of the "farmer" narrative point to the growing global and domestic demand for nature-based carbon credits. Several private sector initiatives and State-level programmes are already piloting models where farmers are compensated for practices that enhance soil organic carbon. The confusion likely stems from the Budget's use of the term "carbon credit programme" in a broader sense, while its detailed architecture, as per the DST road map, is exclusively industrial.

Analysts say the confusion highlights a communication gap and a policy opportunity. The DST road map is is a technically sound, sector-specific document, but the Budget's use of the more familiar term 'carbon credit' has blurred lines. Mention of a "programme" amid discussion of agricultural carbon credits has led some to expect a funded scheme for farmers. This expectation is plausible, as the Agriculture Ministry has been exploring soil health and climate-resilient farming for years. A structured carbon farming programme is a logical next step, but it would need separate policy, funding, and institutional frameworks distinct from the costly, tech-heavy CCUS initiative.

The government faces the task of clarifying this distinction to manage expectations. The ₹20,000 crore CCUS programme is a critical pillar for decarbonising industry, a sector vital for growth but also responsible for a quarter of India's emissions. Its success is non-negotiable for meeting net-zero goals.

Simultaneously, the powerful narrative around farmers and carbon credits highlights a massive parallel opportunity. India's vast agricultural lands hold immense potential for carbon sequestration. A separate, well-designed policy to create a trusted domestic carbon market for agriculture could unlock enormous economic and environmental benefits, truly creating a "new income stream" for farmers.

A multi-sectoral approach is needed

The current debate underscores a pivotal moment in India's climate strategy. Budget 2026 has firmly placed its ₹20,000 crore bet on industrial decarbonisation through CCUS. The "farmer carbon credit" story, while not funded by this specific outlay, reflects a powerful and growing reality in the voluntary carbon space and a compelling demand for a parallel policy initiative. The path ahead requires the government to clearly demarcate these two crucial fronts in the climate fight – smokestack and soil – while advancing both with equal ambition. The confusion may be born of conflation today, but it points to the comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach India will need to forge a sustainable future.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Watch and sign

India's decision to ink a trade deal with the United States only after clarity on tariff issues may come unstuck considering the impulsive nature of U.S. President Donald Trump. Those who had been exporting to the U.S. have burnt their fingers already and will be weary of considering exporting their products to the U.S. hereafter. The Centre may like to improve and stabilise its diplomatic ties with the U.S. but the Indian exporters may not want to take a risk.

Indian exporters, who thrive on thin margins of profit, will keep themselves away from American importers as the imposition of harsh American tariffs at any given point of time cannot be ruled out (Front page, March 17).

V. Lakshmanan,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

The government's decision reflects a pragmatic and strategically sound approach. A premature agreement without clarity on how competing economies are treated could weaken India's export competitiveness in key sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods.

Vidyasagar Reddy Kethiri,
Hanamkonda, Telangana

Political graffiti removal

The Election Commission of India recently announced the election schedule for four States and a Union Territory. Soon after, municipal authorities across cities and towns began removing political graffiti and wall writings put up by various political parties. Why should taxpayers' money be spent to clean up publicity material created by political parties? The government is now spending significant resources on labour and paint to erase these writings from public walls. If political parties are allowed to use public spaces for party or party leaders' publicity, they should either be required to pay a fee for such use or be made responsible for removing the graffiti within a stipulated period of time. In case of non-compliance, the authorities should recover the cost and initiate appropriate legal action.

Y.R.M. Rao,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Why the affiliation system is outdated

Milind Kumar Sharma

teaches in the Department of Production and Industrial Engineering at MBM University, Jodhpur

An often less discussed feature of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 is the new regulatory system envisaged for affiliating colleges. The objective of the new system is to foster empowerment and autonomy by gradually phasing out the affiliation system over a period of 15 years through a process of graded autonomy.

The NEP suggests that each existing university should play the role of a mentor for its affiliated colleges, and enable them to develop their own capabilities and achieve minimum benchmarks in academic and curricular matters, teaching and assessment, governance reforms, financial robustness, and administrative efficiency in order to become self-reliant. All affiliated colleges will have to attain the minimum required standards to secure accreditation benchmarks and acquire the status of an autonomous degree-granting institution. Needless to say, it is a big reform for which nation-wide efforts and governmental support is a *sine qua non*.

Untethering colleges

The college-university affiliation system has long served as the foundational structure for higher education and is so deeply entrenched in the Indian higher education system that disassociating colleges with the university sounds unrealistic. Universities conduct affiliation for colleges in accordance with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines to maintain academic standards, ensure uniform curriculum and examinations, and regulate infrastructure and faculty quality. Moreover, college affiliation in India is not a one-time process. The affiliation is usually granted initially for one year and renewed annually or periodically.

However, while the conventional university affiliation model once provided centralised control and administrative stability, it now seems to hinder the growth, autonomy, and quality of colleges. The university affiliation system is now riddled with systemic inefficiencies, archaic academic rigidity, and administrative challenges that impede the progress of colleges.

Multiple challenges

One of the most significant problems with the affiliation system is the overwhelming burden it places on universities. Most universities in India are affiliated with hundreds of colleges, and entrusted to manage examinations, evaluate answer scripts, design curriculum, monitor college compliance, and oversee academic and extracurricular activities for an overwhelming number of students. The attention of resource strained universities, especially State universities, gets diverted from their core functions, such as research, innovation, faculty development, and collaboration, due to heavy administrative workloads. As a result, universities are compelled to act merely as bureaucratic bodies instead of pushing the boundaries of knowledge both for students and faculty.

The lack of autonomy for affiliated colleges poses another challenge. Under the present university affiliation system, it is mandatory for all colleges to follow the regulations, syllabi, examination patterns, and administrative instructions issued by the affiliating university. This dependency prevents colleges from designing their own courses that align with their local or industrial needs, and emerging market trends. This rigidity imposes uniformity at the cost of creativity, denying colleges the freedom to differentiate themselves through specialised courses, modern pedagogical practices, or interdisciplinary initiatives. As a result, the potential for innovation is stifled.

Then there is the slow pace at which curriculum reforms take place under the university affiliation model. Since universities oversee a large number of colleges, revising curricula requires extensive consultations, committee meetings with the board of studies and department councils, and administrative approvals from academic councils. This process often takes a very long time, causing course content to become outdated by the time reforms are implemented. The educational needs of students in disciplines such as engineering and technology change very rapidly, but the affiliation system is simply not agile enough to respond with the required speed.

Moreover, the affiliation model, despite its best intentions to standardise education, has led to quite the opposite. While all colleges may follow the same curriculum, the actual delivery of education varies drastically due to the huge gaps in infrastructure. Many colleges operate with inadequate laboratories, insufficient library facilities, outdated equipment, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Such disparities weaken the credibility of standardised learning outcomes, as students from different colleges under the same university may graduate with vastly different levels of skill and competence.

An alternate model

While the university affiliation system once played a vital role in expanding higher education, its limitations now hinder progressive educational aspirations.

Instead of affiliations, colleges may be encouraged to participate in the National Institutional Ranking Framework/National Board of Accreditation exercise which is grounded in established quality criteria. The future of higher education in India hinges on empowering institutions with autonomy, flexibility, and the capacity to innovate freely – conditions the affiliation system can no longer adequately provide.

The university affiliation system is now riddled with systemic inefficiencies, archaic academic rigidity, and administrative challenges that impede the progress of colleges

The cost of energy transition

Protests against the hydroelectric project in the Western Ghats just got new life

STATE OF PLAY

Sathish G.T.
sathish.gt@thehindu.co.in

The Karnataka High Court, earlier this month, directed the State government to stop work in the forest area for the Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project, until further orders. A group of environmentalists had moved the Court, challenging the State Wildlife Board's approval for the proposed project in the Sharavathi Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary which is part of the Western Ghats, and a biodiversity hotspot. The Court's order boosted the morale of the environmentalists, who have been opposing the project since it was proposed in 2017.

The Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) proposed the project in the valley of the Sharavathi river, which flows for about 130 km through the Western Ghats before reaching the Arabian sea. The river is already the State's primary hydel power source, with four major power stations operating in its valley.

The KPCL aims to generate 2,000 MW through this project to meet peak-hour energy demands, which can touch 18,000 MW daily. The project has been defended on the grounds that the Central Electricity Authority has recommended a transition to clean energy, targeting 50% non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030. Th the cost of the project which was estimated to be around ₹4,800 crore in 2017, has gone up to nearly ₹10,240 crore.

Furthermore, while the project has received the approval of the State Wildlife Board and an in-principle approval from the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL), forest and environmental clearances are still pending.

Environmental concerns

The Karnataka State Wildlife Board gave its approval for the project in January 2025, with certain conditions. Initially, the KPCL had estimated that more than 16,000 trees were to be cut for the project. The board suggested that it be reduced to 7,000 to 8,000 trees.

Even so, the project continued to face stiff opposition from different groups. Environmentalists, locals, farmers' organisations, and heads of religious institutions spread over the Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts have been protesting against the project. They have held several meetings and highlighted the destruction the project will cause to the forests and the endangered species of flora and fauna, including the lion-tailed macaques, who are endemic to the place. Local residents, who have witnessed frequent landslips during heavy rains in the past few years, are worried that the construction of the tunnel might cause irreparable damage to the region. They are also concerned that the implementing agency might take additional forest land to lay the lines needed to carry the power generated by the project. Petitioners, including environmentalist Akhilesh Chipli, have alleged that the project is against the laws that prohibit non-forest activities in the region.

Interestingly, a site inspection report filed by Praneetha Paul, Deputy Inspector General of Forest of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF), did not recommend the project proposal. The officer stated that the construction of new roads, and the widening of existing roads and other structures would result in the complete destruction of the wet evergreen forests, and that cutting trees would isolate the population of lion-tailed macaques. Environmentalists have cited this report as a key document to support their arguments.

Considering the serious opposition from the public, representatives of the KPCL held meetings in parts of Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada in October 2025 to defend the project. A team official tried to convince the people that the impact of the project would be minimal. They also argued that the project was necessary considering the need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels for energy production.

Enduring fight

However, the KPCL's efforts have failed to convince the protesters. Considering the stiff opposition, the MoEF sent an expert panel to visit the project site, and the panel, in its report, stated that the "limited operational benefit offered by the project seems outweighed by the irreversible ecological, environmental and social costs involved."

The legal setback and the adverse expert report have created a significant hurdle for the project's proponents. The KPCL's next move before the Court and the NBWL will be keenly watched.

T.N. needs more basic science funding to create green tech

Although revenue spending on science and technology has risen in recent years, State funding for fundamental research has been modest

DATA POINT

Vasudevan Mukunth

As Tamil Nadu approaches its Assembly elections, its ambition to become a $1-trillion economy by 2030 and its position as one of India's leading industrial and knowledge hubs means it's worth examining how the State has invested in science and environmental issues in the last five years.

First, the State's strategy for the environment has been to integrate climate action across sectors rather than increase a core allocation for the environment and climate change department. Within this framework, it has launched a series of dedicated environmental missions since 2021. In the 2021-22 fiscal, the State allocated ₹500 crore to establish the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission – one of the first of its kind among States – and another ₹150 crore for the Wetlands Mission to restore 100 ecologically sensitive water bodies. The following year, the State established the Tamil Nadu Green Climate Fund with a ₹1,000 crore corpus to finance renewable energy, electric mobility, pollution-control technologies, forest conservation, and circular-economy projects, among other climate-related technologies.

By 2023-24, it had expanded its conservation efforts by dedicating ₹10 crore to Project Nilgiri Tahr and scaling up the Green Tamil Nadu Mission to increase forest cover. The 2024-25 Budget expanded the Sustainably Harnessing Ocean Resources (SHORE) scheme to strengthen the blue economy, and provided subsidies for electric vehicles.

Spending surged in 2025-26 as the government allocated ₹21,178 crore to the energy department, which includes investments in renewable generation, pumped-storage hydro projects, battery energy storage systems, and other infrastructure, and ₹100 crore to build new basic science research centres in Chennai and Coimbatore.

Not enough funds

Second, although revenue spending on Science and Technology (S&T) has risen in recent years, it still represents only a small share of the State's broader fiscal priorities. It is important to note that according to the National S&T Management Information System (NSTMIS), Tamil Nadu had spent more than ₹600 crore a year on overall R&D until 2020-21. The difference arises because the NSTMIS assesses R&D expenditure across departments rather than going by the expenses under the S&T head.

Even this figure has two important dimensions. For Tamil Nadu, this expense is spread across agriculture (crop research, pest control, etc.), veterinary services (livestock and aquaculture research), public health (clinical research at State medical colleges), and other applied sectors. Dimension 1: applied research doesn't produce the underlying Intellectual property (IP). Dimension 2: in the same period when Tamil Nadu spent just over ₹600 crore a year on R&D, Gujarat spent ₹922 crore and Uttar Pradesh, more than ₹1,000 crore.

Chart 1 shows the expenditure on research and development by select State governments.

A global comparison is possible as well. When South Korea's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was what Tamil Nadu's is today, it was already allocating 1.2% of its GDP to R&D.

However, Tamil Nadu's total R&D expenditure is under 0.5% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), meaning that the State is currently spending less than half of what is required (by the South Korean yardstick) to foster a world-class innovation ecosystem.

The State's dedicated budgetary allocation for Science and Technology in particular has been much lower. In the decade or so leading up to 2021-22, Tamil Nadu had an annual revenue expenditure averaging around ₹10 crore, primarily for running the Tamil Nadu State Council for Science and Technology (TNSCST), the Science City in Chennai, the Tamil Nadu Science and Technology Centre, and for student projects and popularising science. But as it pivoted to being a technology-driven economy and got going on its 'net zero' commitment, the figures began to climb. By the 2025-26 fiscal, the allocation reached ₹67.5 crore and in 2026-27, an estimated ₹81 crore.

Need to focus on basic science

While the increase between pre-2021 and 2021-27 is eightfold in nominal terms, it is dwarfed by the allocations for climate-related missions. The State set aside more than ₹21,000 crore for the energy sector in 2025-26 alone. In fact, until it announced the ₹100 crore package in the 2025-26 Budget for the new basic science research centres in Chennai and Coimbatore, State funding for fundamental research was modest – most of it in the form of small grant programmes (₹10,000 to ₹1,00,000) such as those administered by the TNSCST. Major research institutions in the State, such as the Indian Institute of Technology (Madras) and the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, are mostly funded by the Union government.

Chart 2 shows the budget allocated by the State to the Science and Technology Centre and the Council for Science and Technology.

As a result, the State currently lacks the mature R&D required to develop homegrown technologies. Tamil Nadu's current expenditure risks rendering it a consumer of green technologies rather than a creator of underlying research breakthroughs. For instance, despite Tamil Nadu being a national leader in solar installations, more than 80% of photovoltaic modules in these projects are imported from China or sourced from manufacturing hubs in Gujarat.

Funding gap

The data for the charts were sourced from S&T Research Development Statistics 2022-23 and Tamil Nadu Budget

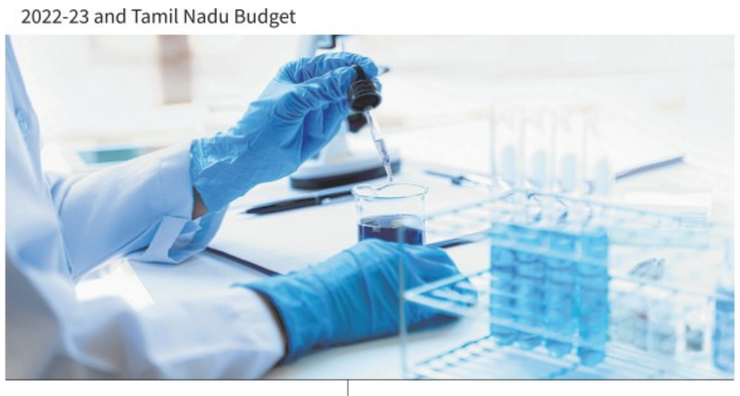


CHART 1: Expenditure on research and development by select State governments (in ₹ crore)

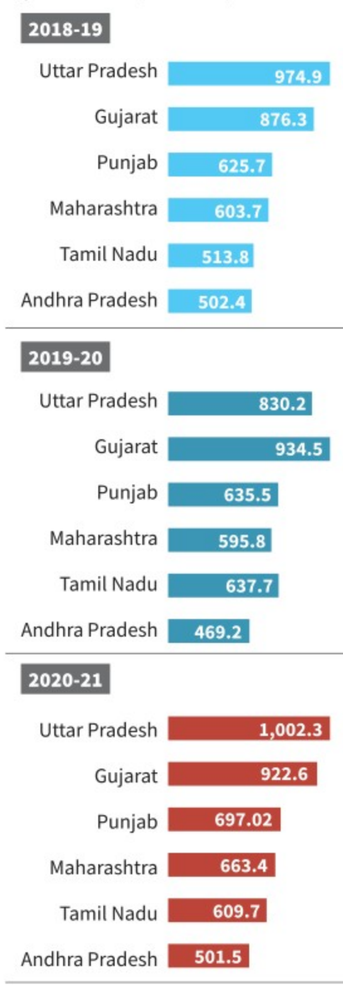
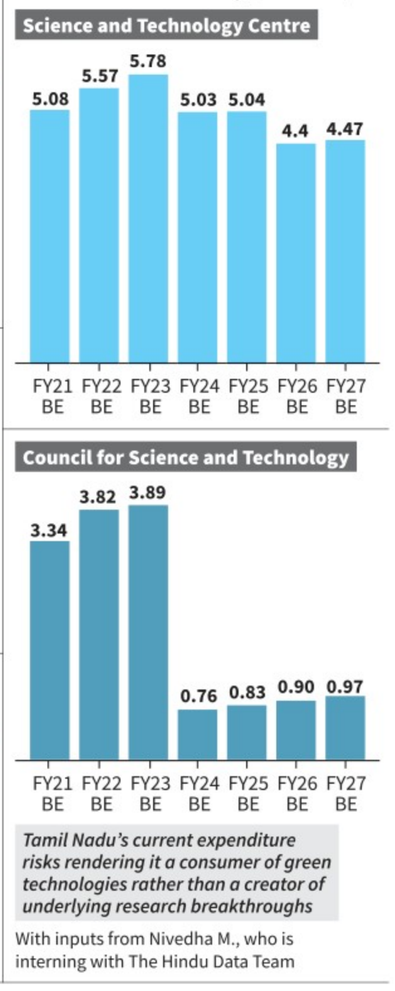


CHART 2: Budget allocated to the Science and Technology Centre and the Council for Science and Technology (in ₹ crore)



Tamil Nadu's current expenditure risks rendering it a consumer of green technologies rather than a creator of underlying research breakthroughs

With inputs from Nivedha M., who is interning with The Hindu Data Team

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 18, 1976

Coonoor polio vaccine unit to be closed

New Delhi, March 17: The oral polio vaccine production unit at the Pasteur Institute, Coonoor, will be closed with effect from March 31. Meanwhile, there is a move for handing over the institute itself to the Centre.

The closure of the vaccine unit, run with Central grants routed through the Indian Council of Medical Research, was decided upon by the Health Ministry on the basis of the opinion of technical experts who had gone into its defective functioning. The technical opinion was that the unit could not be revived without a very heavy expenditure and that even then it was doubtful whether it would be able to produce good, acceptable and safe vaccine.

One of the factors found to have affected the functioning of the unit was dual control. Although the unit was functioning in the Institute, it was an ICMR project and as such there had been lack of rapport between the unit staff and the Institute Director. The Public Accounts Committee of the Lok Sabha had also commented on this sorry state of affairs.

A suggestion was made at one stage that the Institute managed by an Association be handed over to the Centre to ensure effective functioning of the Institute and the vaccine unit.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 18, 1926

Anglo-Indians and the Army

Allahabad, March 17: In connection with the appeal put forward by Colonel Gidney in the Assembly on behalf of the Anglo-Indian community, *The Pioneer* says that one of the great grievances of Anglo-Indians has been the bar which has been placed upon their entry into the Army, and this, with various other issues attending the welfare of the community, is, *The Pioneer* understands receiving the very earnest consideration of the Government. As a result of the Memorandum presented by the Deputation which recently visited England, Lord Birkeuhead has addressed a lengthy note to the Government in India.

The communication, the paper understands, favours the formation of an Anglo-Indian Unit. The community played a part in the War which has not been properly recognised.

From Page One

Pak. attack in Kabul killed 400: Afghanistan

In a late-night post on X, Afghanistan's deputy government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said the airstrike hit the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital, a 2,000-bed facility in Kabul, at about 9 p.m. local time and that large sections of the facility had been destroyed.

Interior Ministry spokesperson Abdul Mateen Qani said Tuesday that 408 people had been killed and 265 injured.

Night-time local television footage showed security forces using flash lights as they carried casualties from the site while firefighters struggled to extinguish the flames.

The Omid hospital was renamed and expanded in size roughly a year ago from the Ibn Sina Drug Addiction Treatment Hospital as part of government plans to stamp out drug addiction in the country. The site, near Kabul's international airport, is located beside a former NATO military base, Camp Phoenix, where U.S. forces used to train the Afghan National Army. After the Taliban seized power, the base was taken over by Afghanistan's new authorities. It wasn't clear what was now housed on the site of the former base.

A reporter for the *Associated Press* in an area near the site at the time of the strike said he heard a military jet fly overhead followed by a very powerful explosion.

Pakistan's Information Ministry said in an X post that the Pakistani military had "precisely targeted" Camp Phoenix, which it said was now a "military terrorist ammunition and equipment storage site." However, it said that the hospital was "multiple kilometres" away from the former camp and accused Afghan officials of lying. Google Maps shows another location, east of Kabul city, also labelled as Camp Phoenix.

Iran's security chief Ali Larijani killed: Israel

On March 13, he was seen rallying in Tehran along with supporters of the government and gave interviews to the state media, saying Iran would not surrender.

Immediately after the IDF and Mr. Katz claimed that he was killed, his Telegram and X handles posted a photo of a handwritten statement from Larijani, paying homage to the Iranian sailors killed in the U.S. strike on the Iris Dena on March 4 off Sri Lanka.

"The martyrdom of the brave members of the Navy of the Army of the Islamic Republic in Dena is part of the sacrifices of the proud nation that has emerged in this time of struggle against international oppressors," Larijani wrote in the message. "Their memory will always remain in the heart of the Iranian nation, and these martyrdoms will strengthen the foundations of the Army of the Islamic Republic for years to come within the structure of the armed forces."

In a separate statement, the IDF said it killed Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of the Basij Force, a paramilitary group, along with his deputy and several other top officials. "During internal protests in Iran, particularly in recent periods as demonstrations intensified, Basij forces under Soleimani's command led the main repression operations, employing severe violence, widespread arrests and the use of force against civilian demonstrators," the IDF said.

In a video message released on Tuesday, Israel Katz, the Defence Minister, said Larijani and Soleimani had "joined the head of the annihilation program, Khamenei, and all the eliminated members of the axis of evil, in the depths of hell".

AFT stays retirement of Colonel Purohit

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) on Monday stayed the retirement of Colonel Shrikant Prasad Purohit, acquitted in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, pending a decision on his statutory complaint on promotion and service benefits.

He had approached the tribunal seeking promotion to the ranks of Colonel and Brigadier, arguing that his career progression had been stalled due to his arrest and prolonged trial in the Malegaon blast case.

He was arrested in 2008 and remained in custody until the Supreme Court granted him bail in 2017. He resumed duties thereafter and has been serving since.

The army officer was acquitted in the Malegaon blast case by a Special NIA Court in Mumbai on July 31, 2025.

Taking note of the acquittal and the circumstances of the case, the tribunal directed that the officer's retirement be kept in abeyance until a decision is taken on his statutory complaint regarding promotion and service benefits.

'Pakistan's bombing of Kabul rehab centre a barbaric act'

India responds to escalation in the ongoing conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan after the Taliban administration revealed that the bombing led to the death of 400 people at the facility

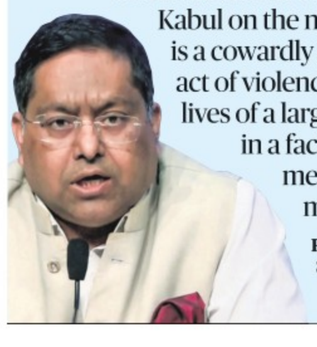
Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday "unequivocally" condemned Pakistan's bombing of Omid Drug Addiction Treatment Hospital in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on the night of March 16, terming it "barbaric" and "unconscionable".

The remarks from the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came hours after the bombing that marked an escalation in the ongoing conflict between Pakistan and the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

The Taliban administration in Kabul had described the attack on the drug rehabilitation centre as a violation of Afghan airspace and revealed that the bombing led to the death of around 400 individuals who were seeking treatment in the facility.

"This heinous act of aggression by Pakistan is also a blatant assault on Afghanistan's sovereignty and a direct threat to regional peace and stability. It reflects Pakistan's persistent pattern of reckless behaviour and its repeated attempts to externalise internal failures through increasingly desperate acts of violence beyond its borders," said Randhir Jaiswal, official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs.



> India unequivocally condemns Pakistan's barbaric airstrike on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul on the night of March 16. This is a cowardly and unconscionable act of violence that has claimed the lives of a large number of civilians in a facility which can by no means be justified as a military target
>
> **RANDHIR JAISWAL**
> Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs

Former military base

The Omid Drug Addiction Treatment Hospital is a former U.S. military base that has been converted into a drug addiction treatment centre for Afghanistan's drug addicts. The base was taken over by the Taliban and converted into a rudimentary care centre after the end of the Ashraf Ghani government in August 2021.

According to Khaama Press of Afghanistan, the Pakistan Air Force has continued bombing across Afghanistan over the past two days and apart from the Omid Drug Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul, it has also bombed targets in Nangarhar province, including Achin, Shinwari districts and the Jalalabad airport.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman of the Taliban administration, said, "Pakistani military regime has once again violated Afghanistan's airspace and targeted a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, resulting in the death and injury of addicts who were undergoing treatment."

Responding to the incident, which marks the largest number of civilian deaths in a single airstrike since the conflict flared up last year between the two sides, Mr. Jaiswal said: "India unequivocally condemns Pakistan's barbaric airstrike on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul on the night of March 16. This is a cowardly and unconscionable act of violence that has claimed the lives of a large number of civilians in a facility which can by no means be justified as a military target."

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge expressed condolences for "Afghan brothers and sisters", saying, "We condemn such acts against humanity in the strongest possible terms. Such barbarism must be strongly rejected globally."

Pakistan has claimed that the hospital was serving as an arms and ammunition depot.

Cong. seeks all-party meet on women's quota law

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

After informal feelers failed to bring the Congress and other Opposition parties to the table to discuss accelerating the implementation of the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*, popularly known as the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju wrote to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday reiterating the request. The Congress, in response, once again conveyed that the issue should be discussed in an all-party meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Writing to Mr. Kharge, Mr. Rijiju underlined the significance of the implementation framework and the requirement of a broad national consensus for the effective operationalisation of the law.

Responding to Mr. Rijiju's letter, Mr. Kharge said he had already informed the government of the Congress's view that an all-party meeting chaired by the Prime Minister should be convened to discuss such a roadmap. "It would be in keeping with the best traditions of parliamentary democracy," he wrote.

Suspension of 8 MPs revoked; Speaker says fake images must not be displayed

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a unanimous resolution to revoke the suspension of eight Opposition members, with Speaker Om Birla reminding the House that members should not bring fake and AI-generated posters and banners to Parliament.

"Yesterday, there were extensive discussions with leaders of all the parties, and everyone said they are committed to ensure that the dignity and glorious tradition of the House remains intact," he said. "My request is that don't display fake or AI-generated photos, placards, banners or posters inside the House or outside. I have mentioned this in today's bulletin and requested members to pay attention to this."

Suspended MPs Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole, Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, and Dean Kuriakose, in the Parliament premises on Tuesday. PTI

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, while moving the motion to revoke the suspension, also stressed that members shouldn't cross a "Lakshman Rekha" (protective boundary) during their protest. "People did not elect us to disrupt House proceedings or stage protests. The House should function smoothly with everyone's cooperation," he said.

Mr. Rijiju moved the motion after Congress Chief Whip K. Suresh "expressed regret over inadvertent indiscretion" by some of the Opposition members.

The House also witnessed a brief exchange between Samajwadi Party (SP) member Dharmendra Yadav and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member Nishikant Dubey after Mr. Yadav maintained that the responsibility of House decorum should not be on Opposition members alone."I want to assure the House that we will not do anything that hurts the dignity of the House. But the ruling alliance members should also behave properly," Mr. Yadav said, naming Mr. Dubey.

Hitting back, Mr. Dubey said he had been a member of the House for the past 17 years, and he had never violated any protocol or decorum of the House.

'UGC-like funding powers to fall under Shiksha Adhishthan'

Abhinay Lakshman
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

The parliamentary panel examining the Bill is led by BJP MP D. Purandeswari.

Months after introducing the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, with a primary objective to separate grants-disbursal powers from the higher education regulatory framework to minimise conflict of interest, the Education Ministry seems to have changed its mind. On Tuesday, it told the Joint Committee of Parliament examining the Bill that a UGC-like grants-disbursal mechanism will now be "devised and adopted under" the proposed Shiksha Adhishthan, without offering any specific details.

Ministry officials told the panel, led by BJP MP D. Purandeshwari, that the UGC currently disburses monthly grants to Central Universities from funds released to it by the Department of Higher Education. It also releases funds under its own schemes, based on quality standards, accreditation status, and National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking.

"Similar qualitative processes/systems shall be devised and adopted under Shiksha Adhishthan," the government told the panel.

Fourth sitting

The Joint Committee, which held its fourth sitting on Tuesday, has 12 members from the BJP and 10 members from Opposition parties, including the Congress, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party, and the Shiv Sena (UBT).

During this sitting, MPs from the Congress, DMK, and Trinamool Congress raised concerns about centralised control under the proposed structure, arguing that even though there is representation from States, it is the Centre that selects the State representatives. This would allow the Centre to set up a "super-regulator", they said, warning that this was against the principles of federalism.

'Skeletal' Bill

Opposition members also argued that the proposed legislation is "skeletal" in nature, requiring most of the details to be figured out by the government during the drafting of the Rules.

Some members argued this was akin to asking that the Bill be approved without presenting the whole scope of what the government plans to do.

'Opposition's stir against new rural jobs Act is a failure'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Allocations to rural development projects increased under the Narendra Modi government when compared with the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said while replying to a debate in the Rajya Sabha on the working of his Ministry on Tuesday.

The Congress lacked policy clarity, leadership, and intent, the Minister said.

The protests against the change in the name of MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) to VB-G RAM G [Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)] Act did not succeed as the country was not standing with them, Mr. Chouhan said.

NIA probes wider network after arrest of U.S., Ukrainian nationals

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A citizen of the United States, who was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) along with six Ukrainians on the charge of illegally crossing into Myanmar via Mizoram to train armed ethnic groups in weapons handling and drone warfare methods, has been under observation for several months, according to sources in the agency.

The accused have been identified as U.S. national Matthew Aaron Van Dyke; and Hurba Petro, Slyviak Taras, Ivan Sukmanovskyi, Stefankiv Marian, Honcharuk Maksim, and Kaminskyi Viktor from Ukraine. The NIA is examining their digital footprint to establish the identities of other suspected members of the network.

While three of the six Ukrainians were arrested at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, the others were held at Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport in Lucknow, all within hours of each other on the night of March 13.

The six foreigners were produced before an NIA court in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

Social media posts

Mr. Van Dyke was picked up on the same night at Kolkata airport. A social media account believed to be linked to him describes him as a "media personality" based in Ukraine. In the posts, he claims to run covert operations in countries including Venezuela to effect a regime change. "To the leaders of Venezuela, Burma (Myanmar), Iran and other authoritarian regimes, we are coming for you," one post said.

A few months ago, the same account posted a message saying the writer was in a conflict zone. He also referred to using Starlink for a Spotify conversation.

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson said that they were "aware of the situation", but could not comment on cases involving U.S. citizens for privacy reasons.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said that the six Ukrainians had been provided with legal aid and a defence counsel for the court proceedings, but added that "no established facts" proving their involvement in any illegal activity in India or Myanmar had been presented so far.

In a statement on Tuesday, it suggested that the presence of the accused in a restricted-access zone in the North East may have been an "unintentional violation".

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Ambassador Oleksandr Polishchuk met with Sibi George, Secretary (West) of the Ministry of External Affairs, and handed over a letter of "protest" as the Embassy had not been allowed to communicate with the Ukrainians in court nor granted consular access.

Veteran JD(U) leader, ex-MP K.C. Tyagi quits party

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

JD(U) adviser and former Rajya Sabha member K.C. Tyagi quit the party on Tuesday, nearly two months after it distanced itself from him, stating that his remarks did not reflect its official position on various issues.

Mr. Tyagi is likely to join another party and play an active role in Uttar Pradesh politics in the near future, informed sources said. Associated with the JD(U) since its merger with the Samata Party in 2003, he had earlier served as the party's chief national spokesperson and national general secretary.

In a public statement, Mr. Tyagi recalled his long association with the party and said, "My personal respect for Nitish Kumar, who has been my comrade for nearly half a century, also remains unchanged."

APPEAL

I am **Fathima, 11 years old** suffering from "T Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia". I have to undergo Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy at **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai**. The total expenditure is **Rs.16,00,000/-**. My father is a daily wage earner with poor income and we cannot meet the hospital expenditure. Kindly help me with your support. Donations sent by Ch/D.D. favouring **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be acknowledged**. The donations sent through Ch/D.D/ M.O/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c No. 60182010063310, IFSC No: CNRB0016018) favouring **WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE** is exempted under 80G IT. Your e-mail ID is requested.

All correspondence is done through **WWS,** Regd. Public Charitable Trust, **Flat No. GF 1, Corddel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No.29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai-600006. Ph: 044-42137401/ 31523781/ 7338978027.**

E-mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com.

Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org. Fathima

ASSEMBLY POLLS

EC deploys over 1,000 central observers

The Election Commission (EC) has deployed a total of 1,111 observers for the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, as well as the byelections in six States, with West Bengal receiving the most number of observers.

West Bengal has been assigned one general observer for each of its 294 constituencies, along with 84 police observers and 100 expenditure observers. Tamil Nadu has been allocated 136 general observers, 40 police observers and 151 expenditure observers. The commensurate figures for Assam are 51, 35, and 50 and for Kerala are 51, 17, and 40. For Puducherry, the numbers are 17, four, and 17.

The EC has directed observers to be stationed in their respective constituencies by Wednesday.

The most number of observers have been deployed in West Bengal.

Assam Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi resigns

Less than a month after its former State president Bhupen Kumar Borah switched over to the BJP, the Assam Congress lost one of its three MPs on Tuesday.

Pradyut Bordoloi, who represented the Congress from the Nagaon Lok Sabha seat, submitted his resignation to party president Mallikarjun Kharge. The latter's office said it did not receive the letter.

However, Subrata Borah, the All India Congress Committee in charge of Assam for the OBC wing, said his resignation was very unfortunate. He added that State party president Gaurav Gogoi and AICC general secretary in charge of Assam Jitendra Singh went to Mr. Bordoloi's residence to dissuade him. Mr. Bordoloi was reportedly feeling sidelined in the party.

> The key demand from Bengal is first guarantee the voting rights of those under adjudication, and then proceed with the voting process
>
> **DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA**
> CPI(ML) leader

'Single-phase poll in Assam favours BJP'

A Congress ally in Assam alleged on Tuesday that the Election Commission (EC) scheduled a single-phase Assembly poll in the State to favour the ruling BJP.

Assam Jatiya Parishad leader Jagadish Bhuyan said, the "belated" announcement of the schedule left only 12 days for campaigning.

> I believe we will be able to capitalise on the disgust of people and reverse the stagnation of Bengal brought about by the Trinamool rule
>
> **SWAPAN DASGUPTA**
> BJP leader

'Gold theft' and SC hearing on women's entry have put the Sabarimala temple under spotlight. FILE PHOTO

A hill temple returns to centre stage in Kerala politics

Hiran Unnikrishnan
KOTTAYAM

When the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) announced plans last September to organise a Global Ayyappa Sangamam, the political undertones were hard to miss. With the local body election approaching and Assembly polls not far away, the gathering of devotees of Lord Ayyappa quickly took on significance beyond the realm of faith.

For a Left Democratic Front (LDF) government long associated with rationalist politics, the embrace of religious symbolism was striking. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan shared the stage with representatives of several Hindu organisations, signalling what many viewed as an attempt to rebuild bridges with sections of the Hindu electorate.

Whether the outreach worked, however, is debatable. In the local body polls held months later, the United Democratic Front (UDF) emerged as the clear gainer, winning four of the six corporations, 54 municipalities, and 504 panchayats.

Women entry controversy

The politics of Sabarimala temple has deep roots. The controversy which followed the Supreme Court verdict in 2018 allowing women of all age groups to enter the hill temple, triggered massive protests and hurt the LDF in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Fresh controversies, including the alleged gold theft at the temple and the ongoing Supreme Court hearing on women's entry, have once again pushed Sabarimala temple into the political spotlight.

Sensing an opportunity, the Opposition, particularly the UDF, is attempting to keep the issue firmly in the public discourse. "Be it in 2018 or in 2025, the devotees of Lord Ayyappa have not received justice and this is certainly going to influence the final outcome," senior Congress leader and former Home Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan said. According to him, the temple occupies a special place in the political imagination of voters in the south-central districts of Kerala.

Change in stance

The LDF, however, rejects any suggestion that it has lost ground over the issue. The coalition also appears to be banking heavily on its latest move to retract its earlier stand supporting the entry of women of all ages.

V.N. Vasavan, the Devaswom Minister, insists the government has acted decisively to safeguard the temple. "It was this government that first proposed an investigation by a Special Investigation Team under the court's supervision," he said, adding that irregularities at Sabarimala accumulated across political regimes.

If the LDF and the UDF remain locked in a familiar political contest over the issue, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears to have struggled to convert the controversy into sustained electoral momentum. Party insiders admit that, unlike in 2018, the BJP has not been able to recreate a similar wave of public mobilisation.

Political scientist G. Gopa Kumar, former Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Kerala, believes the electoral dividends from the Sabarimala debate have so far flowed more towards the UDF than the BJP.

At the same time, he cautions against overstating religious polarisation in Kerala. Compared with the Hindi belt, the response among the State's Hindu electorate remains more tempered, he said.

Assam's *dramatis personae*: Himanta, Gaurav, immigrants, and development

The BJP's pet narrative of protecting Assam from the 'infiltrators', and the personal rivalry between Himanta Biswa Sarma and Gaurav Gogoi are likely to dominate Assam's first single-phase Assembly polls in 25 years; fight of six communities demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status a key issue

IN FOCUS

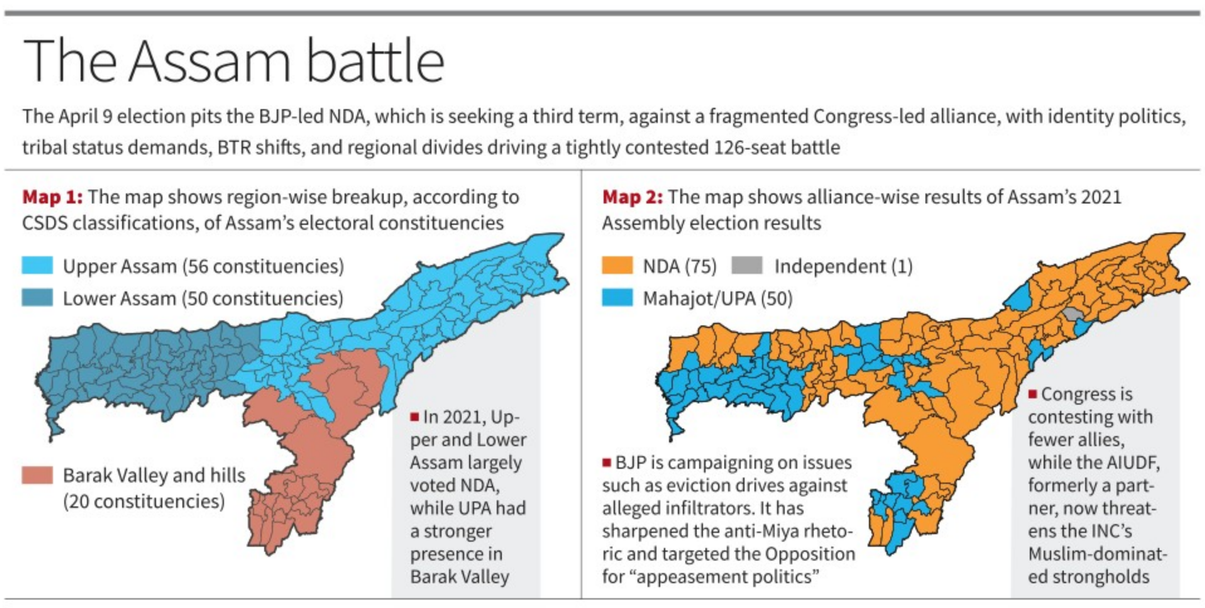
Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The April 9 Assembly election in Assam is expected to be more than a high-voltage battle of two alliances – one led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) eyeing a third straight term and the other by the Congress.

The spotlight of the election to the 126-member House, the first single-phase exercise in Assam since 2001, will be on the bitter rivalry between Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and State Congress president Gaurav Gogoi.

The countdown to the outcome of their public feud intensified on March 15 when the Election Commission (EC) fixed April 9 as the day of polling in Assam, along with Kerala and Puducherry. All political parties have appreciated the date, five days before the mid-April Rongali or Bohag Bihu.

Election issues in Assam are almost always repeated. These include development, floods and erosion, infrastructure push, welfare schemes, alleged corruption, and identity politics, primarily the fear of "Bangladeshi", or "Miya", people taking over the State and the fight of six communities – Adivasi or "Tea Tribes", Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, Matak, Moran, and Tai-Ahom – demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.



'Miya' narrative

One of the defining but all-too-familiar narratives likely to shape the coming election is the BJP's political messaging around the Miya, a pejorative associated with Bengali-origin Muslim communities in Assam, often vilified as Bangladeshis. The BJP has framed issues of land encroachment, demographic change, and identity around this narrative, seeking to consolidate indigenous and Assamese-speaking Hindu voters.

The BJP claims that it is the only party serious about securing the future of Assam by launching an eviction drive to free 1.51 lakh *bighas* of government land from "Bangladeshi" squatters, and vowing to eject all "infiltrators" if given another chance. The anti-Miya rhetoric has become shriller than before, with Congress and other Opposition parties being projected as Muslim appeasers.

The ST issue has become more complicated with the proposal to add a new category - ST (Valley) - to the existing ST (Plains) and ST (Hills) to accommodate the six communities. While the six communities agree that getting ST status is easier said than done, the 14 existing tribes have warned against any move to expand the list and dilute the rights and privileges they enjoy.

The issue is likely to be a double-edged sword for the BJP in at least 30 Assembly constituencies covered by tribal councils.

Among the new issues is the public demand for justice for singer-composer Zubeen Garg, who died in Singapore on September 19, 2025. The Congress-led alliance has been cornering the BJP-led government for allegedly shielding Garg's "murderers".

Sarma vs. Gogoi

The electoral contest, though, is likely to be known for the almost personal battle between Mr. Sarma and Mr. Gogoi, who defied an intense BJP campaign to win the Jorhat Lok Sabha seat in 2024. The latter's popularity is perceived to be a worry for the BJP in eastern Assam, a region that yielded the BJP the bulk of its seats in 2016 and 2021.

The rivalry between the two leaders intensified after the Chief Minister accused Mr. Gogoi of maintaining links with Pakistan and ordered a Special Investigation Team probe against him.

Change in partner

The BJP is going to the polls with three partners – the Asom Gana Parishad, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), and the Rabha Hasong Joutha Mancha. What has changed from 2021 is the replacement of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) with the BPF for 15 seats across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The UPPL, which walked out of the NDA on Tuesday, decided to field candidates against the BJP and the BPF across the BTR and six more constituencies beyond.

'Tea tribes' factor

A popular theory is that elections in Assam are won or lost based on which party or alliance get two "bulk vote banks" – Muslims and "Tea tribes" or Adivasis – support.

The Congress allegedly used to enjoy the support of both groups until the Adivasis began gravitating toward the BJP in the 2010s.

The BJP has showed that the Adivasis, specifically across the tea belts of eastern Assam, matter to them by doling out cash benefits and starting the process of granting them land rights in the labour lines of over 800 tea estates.

The BJP and its allies are also banking on the *Orunodoi* scheme, whose 40 lakh beneficiary families received ₹9,000 each less than a week before the election schedule was announced.

Dent in Congress votes

The Congress is going to the polls with four allies, 11 fewer than in 2021. These are the Assam Jatiya Parishad, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the CPI (Marxist-Leninist), and the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

The Congress-led alliance is wary of the damage Raijor Dal, led by MLA Akhil Gogoi, could inflict. Differences over seats led to the two parties going separate ways.

Another party that could upset the Congress applecart in Muslim-dominated seats is the All India United Democratic Front, led by Badruddin Ajmal.

Trinamool drops 74 MLAs; Mamata to take on Suvendu in Bhabanipur

Shiv Sahay Singh
Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Tuesday announced the names of 291 candidates for the 294 Assembly seats of West Bengal for the coming election. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will contest from Bhabanipur, the constituency she has been representing since 2011, where she will take on BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari.

Including Ms. Banerjee, the Trinamool has fielded 52 women candidates, 95 candidates from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, and 47 candidates from minority communities.

Facing the anti-incumbency factor after three consecutive terms, the Trinamool has retained 135 sitting MLAs, dropped around 74 legislators, and shifted another 15 to different constituencies.

While the BJP was audacious in announcing Mr. Adhikari's candidature from two seats (Nandigram and Bhabanipur), the Trinamool was conservative in its approach, with the party chairperson contesting from Bhabanipur.

Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee with the Trinamool Congress candidates' list in Kolkata on Tuesday. ANI

Ms. Banerjee did not risk any new faces from the television and film industry, as she did in previous elections.

The Trinamool Congress did not show any faith in former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee, who spent over two years behind bars for his alleged role in the school recruitment scam, but the party has re-nominated Jyotipriyo Mullick from Habra in North 24 Parganas. Mr. Mullick was arrested in the Public Distribution System scam from Habra in North 24 Parganas.

Ms. Banerjee has put in the names of almost all the members of the outgoing Cabinet and has renominated Firhad Hakim from Kolkata Port; Udayan Guha from Dinhata in Cooch Behar district; Bratya Basu from Dumdum; Chandrima Bhattacharya from Dumdum Uttar; Sashi Panja from Shyampukur in Kolkata; Siddiqullah Chowdhury from Monteshwar Assembly in Bardhaman; and Manas Ranjan Bhuniya from Sabang. Minister Sovandeb Chattopadhyay will contest from Ballygunge in Kolkata. The most significant inclusion in the Trinamool list is party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh from Beleghata Assembly seat and former journalist Devdeep Purohit from the Khardah Assembly seat.

'Striking a balance'

In the selection of candidates, the Trinamool has tried to strike a balance between the old guard and new entrants. The younger faces include Shreya Pandey, daughter of the late Sadhan Pande, a former Minister, from Maniktala in Kolkata; and Sirsanya Banerjee, son of MP Kalyan Banerjee, from Uttarpara in Hooghly district.

"In the 2026 Assembly election, we will win by securing more than 226 seats. This is our firm belief," Ms. Banerjee said.

In three seats in the Darjeeling hills – Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong – the Trinamool has not fielded candidates. The party's ally, the Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha, will put up candidates in the Darjeeling hills.

As transfers continue, Mamata says EC can 'campaign for BJP'

Shrabana Chatterjee
Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday continued with its spate of transfers of top police officers in West Bengal, two days after the dates of the Assembly polls were announced.

Upset with the electoral body's decisions, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that the officers who had been transferred would return to their earlier postings once the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is lifted after the polls in May.

Nineteen senior police officers were transferred on Tuesday, including two Additional Director-Generals of Police (ADGs), four Commissioners of Police, 12 Superintendents of Police of districts, and one Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Police.

These transfers came a day after the Chief Secretary, Home Secretary, and the Director-General of Police were removed from their positions and restricted from participating in any poll-related work.

'All are our officers'

Ms. Banerjee also accused the EC of working under the influence of the BJP and suggested that the electoral body should "start campaigning for the BJP".

"You can do whatever you want... But all officers are our officers... You may take away all our power, but you will never be able to take away our manpower... The people will vote for us," Ms. Banerjee said while announcing the list of candidates for the Assembly polls.

She said that in case of any disasters or law and order situation following the transfers, the people of West Bengal should blame the EC and the BJP for any issues in controlling the situation. She also alleged that the new officials who had been appointed to the crucial posts would help the Opposition party bring in arms, money, and drugs into West Bengal ahead of the election.

INBRIEF

Health Minister must resign, says Patnaik as toll rises to 12

The death toll in the fire at the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, Odisha rose to 12 on Tuesday after two more victims died of injuries. The incident has sparked a political uproar with Leader of Opposition and BJD president Naveen Patnaik demanding the resignation of the Health Minister. Addressing the Assembly, the former Chief Minister said, "The Health Department cannot hide behind 'inquiries'. I demand the resignation of Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling."

Una flogging case: court awards five-year prison term

A special court in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district on Tuesday imposed a five-year jail term and ₹5,000 fine on each of the five men convicted in the 2016 Una flogging case, where four Dalit men were assaulted while attempting to skin a dead cow. The verdict followed Monday's order by a special court in Veraval, which found the five accused guilty and acquitted 35 others. Proceedings against a police officer named in the case were closed following his death, while the trial involving a juvenile accused is under way.

West Asia conflict takes a toll on medical tourism in India

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

India's state-of-the-art healthcare at affordable prices has attracted patients from across the world over the last few decades, but the travel disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict in West Asia are creating new challenges, both for patients unable to fly to India to avail treatment and for the medical tourism industry which is facing the slowdown of a significant market.

At Delhi's Fortis Healthcare, for instance, there has been a drop in the number of patients coming from West Asia, according to the group's chief operating officer Anil Vinayak. Since the conflict broke out, there has been a decline of more than 30% in international footfall across all Fortis hospitals, he noted. This is especially significant in light of the fact that West Asia is a large contributor, amounting to nearly a third of all international business at Fortis, Mr. Vinayak said.

During the initial days of the conflict, the impact was minimal, as several patients had already travelled to India. Gradually, however, the numbers have dipped significantly. "If we compare the last 10 days of February with the first 10 days of March, the footfall of patients from the Middle East has dropped by 75%," he said.

Aashish Chaudhry, managing director of Aakash Healthcare in Delhi, pointed out that airspace restrictions, flight rerouting, and rising travel uncertainties are directly influencing patient mobility, both for those seeking treatment in India and for Indian patients who traditionally travelled to destinations such as Dubai and other regional hubs for specialised care.

South India less hit

The disruptions have been relatively less in southern India. Chennai's Apollo Proton Cancer Centre (APCC), for instance, sees a significant footfall of overseas patients. "We get patients from SAARC nations, Europe, Middle East, and from a good number of African nations. Patients from West Asian countries account for a fair share. Among them, Oman and the UAE account for the highest share," says Karan

Patients from Oman and the UAE make up the highest share of those visiting from West Asia for treatment in India. FILE PHOTO

Puri, chief executive officer, Apollo Speciality Hospitals, Teynampet and APCC, Taramani, Chennai.

Mr. Puri said that while there has not been much of an impact yet, as overseas patient flow has remained the same, if the situation turns from bad to worse, then there might be a dip. "We do get a decent number of patients for bone marrow transplantation from Oman. We haven't seen any issues yet," Mr. Puri said.

In Hyderabad too, patient numbers are down, but not by much. Sameer Agrawal, deputy general manager for international business at Apollo Hospitals, said there has been a marginal decline of about 2% to 3% in the number of patients arriving from West Asia as part of its overall international patient volume. "However, this has been mitigated partly due to direct connectivity to Hyderabad via Ethiopian airlines, which is still functioning and no tickets getting cancelled. The patients who travel with Emirates and Qatar are definitely affected," he said.

Mohammed Farouk, chief operating officer of Rela Hospital in Chennai, said that there has been very minimal and short-term disruptions. "Take Oman for instance. The government funds patients starting with their travel, treatment, and accommodation. A few of them were supposed to arrive when the war broke. After this, the Oman government rescheduled their flights to another date in March," he said.

Rela Hospital receives international patients from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, West Asia, and Africa. Most of the overseas patients seek high-end cancer care and organ transplants at the hospital, he added. "Patients from Oman are streaming through, and business has not been affected too much. The elective treatments were minimally affected but are slowly coming up. It is the ease of travel that has been affected but we do not anticipate a long-term issue at this point in time," Mr. Farouk said.

Flight disruptions

For patients, flight cancellations and restrictions have created havoc. There are currently no flights from Iraq at all, Mr. Vinayak noted. Flights from the rest of West Asia have also declined sharply due to air space issues. "Although there is no direct flight-related issue with Africa or other parts of the world, flight costs have surged and patients are fearful to travel currently," he said.

Revenue impact

For the current month, the overall revenue impact on international medical tourism may be about 15% to 20%, Mr. Vinayak said. However, a more significant impact may be seen in the coming months due to the decline in new patient arrivals from several key source countries, he added.

Mr. Agarwal noted that patient footfall typically declines during the month of Ramzan, thereby masking the full extent of the impact.

In the short term, there may be logistical challenges, but Dr. Chaudhry pointed out that there is also a simultaneous shift in preference. Many patients who would earlier transit through or seek treatment in West Asian medical hubs are now evaluating India as a stable, accessible, and clinically advanced alternative, he said.

(With inputs from Bindu Shajan Perappadan in Delhi, Siddharth Kumar Singh in Hyderabad, and Serena Josephine M. in Chennai)

SC allows 12 weeks' paid leave to all new adoptive mothers

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a judgment on Tuesday, declared the protection of maternity leave for working women as a basic human right while urging the Union government to legally recognise paternity leave as a social security benefit, noting that parenthood is not a solitary function performed by one parent alone.

The judgment came in a challenge to provisions in the Maternity Benefit Act, which was replaced by the Code of Social Security in November 2025, which dictated that only mothers who legally adopt a child below the age of three months were entitled to seek maternity benefit of 12 weeks.

'Lengthy process'

The petition filed by Hamsaanandini Nanduri, represented by advocate Bani Dikshit, argued that the provision under challenge, Section 60(4) of the 2020 Code, unjustly deprived a mother adopting a child of three months or above of their physical and emotional well-being. Besides, the petitioner successfully argued that the process of legal adoption usually took over three months to complete, rendering the provision completely otiose.

Justice Pardiwala, authoring the judgment for a Bench comprising Justice R. Mahadevan, observed that an adoptive mother had the same rights and obligations towards the child as the natural mother. In fact, in a case of adoption, the emotional bond with the child has to be consciously nurtured through time, presence and sustained caregiving.

The court held adoption as an "expression of reproductive autonomy".

"The concept of maternity benefit acknowledges the ability of a woman to exercise her reproductive choices without fear of losing her employment, more particularly, the economic security. Thus, it ensures that motherhood does not become a factor for exclusion at the workplace," Justice Pardiwala observed in the judgment, concluding that the provision was unconstitutional and discriminatory.

The court pointed out that a mother, without maternity benefit, would be driven back to work, leaving the child with, probably an older sibling. "And if the older sibling happens to be a girl child, it would result in her being withdrawn from school, which reinforces the vicious cycle of gender inequality," Justice Pardiwala pointed out.

On father's presence

Pressing the Union government to make specific legal provisions for paternity leave, the Supreme Court said a child should not be deprived of her father's presence and a new mother her partner's companionship in the early phase of caregiving.

'Both govt., people have to be flexible regarding demands'

Ladakh climate activist Sonam Wangchuk seeks a judicial closure of his case, says 'linguistic misunderstandings' may have been one of the reasons for his detention for 170 days under NSA

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

In his first remarks after being released from jail, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Tuesday said he would like a judicial closure of his case and "linguistic misunderstandings" may have been one of the reasons for his detention under the National Security Act (NSA) for 170 days.

Mr. Wangchuk was released on Saturday from Jodhpur Central Jail after the Union Home Ministry revoked the NSA order using administrative powers rarely exercised.

He hoped that the Supreme Court would also record its judgment, despite the revocation, "so that it guides future executives and policymakers on how to use and especially how not to use such laws (NSA)".

Following violence in Leh city on September 24, 2025, which left four people dead during a protest demanding Statehood and inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Mr. Wangchuk was detained under the NSA, a law under which an individual can be detained without a trial for a year. His wife, Gitanjali J. Angmo, challenged the detention in the top court, and Mr. Wangchuk was released on March 14, days before the court was expected to give its verdict.

Sonam Wangchuk addresses a press conference at Lodhi Estate in New Delhi on Tuesday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Mr. Wangchuk told *The Hindu* that the Union government did not keep any condition for his release, and even if they did, he was prepared to spend 12-24 months in jail.

'Struggle will continue'

Asked about the criticism from some sections that labelled him "anti-national", he said, "My movement was not for myself. It was to preserve the culture and environment of Ladakh. If they do not honour that, then our struggle will continue."

He alleged he was "bundled and thrown into jail" and was not allowed communication with his family and legal team for almost a week. He credited his wife Ms. Angmo, and his legal team, led by Congress leader Vivek Tankha, for putting up a "spirited fight".

Mr. Wangchuk said both the government and people have to be flexible regarding demands. "Talks are a give-and-take process; both sides have to be flexible and considerate," he said, adding that prolonged delays would hamper meaningful conversation.

"I never wanted to do agitations; (I) was forced to protest. We don't want to (protest). We should join hands and set an example," he added.

Talking about the reasons behind his detention, he said, "Linguistic misunderstandings led to the grounds of detention."

9-judge Bench starts hearing on definition of 'industry'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Tuesday asked the government whether a canteen run in a defence research organisation would be considered an 'industry' or a 'sovereign function'.

The court's query came on the first day of the hearing of a reference regarding the definition of 'industry' under Section 2(j) of the now-repealed Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

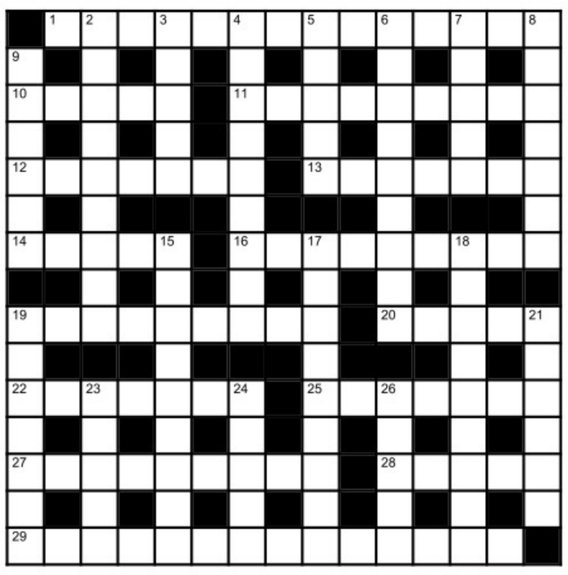
The nine-judge Bench is examining whether "social welfare activities and schemes or other enterprises" undertaken by government departments or its instrumentalities could be construed as industrial activity. Another question framed by the Supreme Court for consideration by the proposed nine-judge Bench is a clarification on what 'state/sovereign activities' would fall within the definition of industry under Section 2(j).

TH CROSSWORD + 14744

(set by Pixie Dust)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Salt & ice repeatedly consumed... It's divine? (14)
10 Finally Emma, Theo & Roger sight a large vessel (5)
11 Spooner's model kin in protective covering (9)
12 Fine in a US state and city (7)
13 Old lady tires out masters (7)
14 Curb mob hastily in possession of recalled weapon (1-4)
16 Introduce entropies animatedly (9)
19 Two young women court lecturer in thermal material (5,4)
20 To some extent glad it's revolutionary and related to current events? (5)
22 About the endless conflict with Tesla? Awry! (7)
25 Exhausted chap Miles, with chapped dirty tumbler (7)
27 An "Oval VIP" broadcast referring to the work of a psychologist (9)
28 As per rumours Miss is unattached (5)
29 Does this entitlement programme somehow ease Clod's curiosity? (6,8)

Down

2 Movies (not English) about Ohio supporting automobile growth (9)
3 Beast and spiritual leader in conversation (5)
4 Bewildered oarsman in country (3,6)
5 Mob cycling around a state in the east (5)
6 What a toupee protects is off the record! (3-6)
7 Comb caught by others (5)
8 General we hear, fixed a dangerous marine condition (3,4)
9 Boot from every third magical elmwood? Sigh! (6)
15 Supervisor with a heavenly body in a Brazilian dance (5,4)
17 Emerging adult assumes stage is created basically for one well suited to be on screen (9)
18 Radical amount? (3,3,3)
19 Reprimand visiting grand parents for alcoholic drinks (7)
21 Panic inside flat he renovated (6)
23 Leaders having a vacation over Christmas in confusion (5)
24 Rides in slips (5)
26 Grinder just switched sides (5)

SUDOKU

		8				3		
	5	3			2			
					1		4	6
	2			8			3	4
		1				5		
8	4			3			9	
5	3		4					
			2			1	7	
		6				4		

No.SS6823 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

U	N	P	A	C	K	C	H	A
A	T	I	U	S	R	E	S	T
S	C	H	O	O	N	E	R	S
R	N	G	S	A	D	T	P	E
R	E	M	P	T	O	R	Y	E
S	P	Y	I	R	E	O	I	M
A	D	M	O	N	E	Y	D	E
F	T	L	Y	T	A	F	O	G
O	T	H	I	C	O	P	P	O
S	I	T	E	M	A	P	A	B
I	E	R	T	A	T	T	L	E
T	A	L	E	C	I	E	I	M
I	O	P	A	R	S	E	C	M
A	I	N	M	A	S	T	G	H
H	A	S	I	E	R	E	S	I
D	U	A	L	T	U	D	O	R
S								

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	2	6	3	1	7	9	4	8
9	3	8	4	5	6	2	1	7
1	4	7	8	9	2	6	5	3
2	6	3	7	4	8	5	9	1
4	8	5	1	2	9	7	3	6
7	9	1	5	6	3	8	2	4
8	5	2	6	3	4	1	7	9
6	1	4	9	7	5	3	8	2
3	7	9	2	8	1	4	6	5

FAITH

Sage Vyasa's contribution

As Sage Veda Vyasa was born on an island in the deep waters of the Yamuna river, he is called Dvaipayana, derived from the root Dweepa. The river Yamuna is associated with Krishna, so he is also known as "Krishna Dvaipayana." The Vedas are considered the divine rules and codes of God (Lord's *Sankalpa*) for the world. They describe what God has planned for the universe and human beings.

Water is essential to the survival of humans and all living beings. Yajnas (sacrificial rituals) are performed for the welfare of the world. It is believed that the offerings in yajnas reach the Sun and return to the earth in the form of rain. Because of sufficient rain, water becomes available, and with water we obtain food (*annam*), which is essential for the survival of all creatures. These important ideals are mentioned in the Vedas. Sage Vyasa classified the Vedas into different groups. Sri Damodara Dikshitar said in a discourse that the Rig Veda hymns are used to invite the devas (deities). Yajur Veda mantras are used while performing homa or yajna rituals to the devas. In Sama Veda, hymns or chants are sung in praise of the deities. These yajnas are generally performed by learned priests called Dikshitars. Because he divided and organised the Vedas, he came to be known as Veda Vyasa.

The Atharva Veda contains knowledge of warfare, methods for defeating enemies, preparation of weapons, and information on medicines. Vyasa's disciples included Jaimini, Sumantu, Paila and Vaisampayana. His important works include the Mahabharata (the fifth Veda), Brahma Sutras and Srimad Bhagavata. The Puranas were compiled by Veda Vyasa.

INBRIEF

Maruti Suzuki receives ₹5,786 cr. income tax order

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Tuesday said it had received a draft assessment order worth ₹5,786.4 crore from the income tax authority and the company will challenge the order. "The company has received a Draft Assessment Order for FY 2022-23 wherein certain additions/disallowances amounting to ₹57,864 million with respect to returned income has been proposed," the carmaker said in a BSE filing. MSI will file its objections before the dispute resolution panel, it stated. There is no impact on financial, operation or other activities of the company due to this order, it added. Maruti Suzuki shares settled at ₹12,993.55 apiece, up 1.88% on the BSE. PTI

'24-hour Speed Post launch follows months of testing'

The Department of Posts' (DoP) announcement of 24 and 48-hour guaranteed Speed Post services follows months of testing, and the resolution of a key logistical hurdle, Ministry officials told *The Hindu*. The facility includes letters and parcels between Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata. What made the time-bound guarantee possible was getting guaranteed blocks of space on passenger flight cargo holds, which India Post has used for years to transmit Speed Post articles faster. Regular commercial passenger flights routinely carry goods for courier and logistics firms, and India Post has been among those that utilise the spare capacity after the cargo hold is done loading passenger luggage. However, last year, the DoP floated a tender seeking "hard blocked" space, so that excess demand wouldn't lead to mail bags being tossed out and used in the next flight. "We have five airlines" with hard blocked space, Dushyant Mudgal, Deputy Director General of Mail Operations at the Department of Posts, told *The Hindu*.

Domestic LPG production up 38%, informs Centre

Domestic production now estimated at more than 48,000 tonnes on a day-to-day basis; increase follows issuance of supply maintenance orders

Kalyanaraman M.
CHENNAI

Kitchen lifeline: Of the total LPG consumption, some 85-90% goes into households as cooking gas. G.N. RAO

Domestic LPG production has increased 38% till date since the supply maintenance orders were issued, Union government officials said at a briefing on Tuesday.

In February, as per government data, domestic LPG production was slightly more than 1 million tonne. Normally, India's daily LPG consumption is around 90,000 tonne on an average. Out of this, 55,000 tonnes comes from imports and 35,000 from domestic production on a proportionate basis.

A 38% increase could mean that domestic production is now more than 48,000 tonnes on a day-to-day basis. Of the total LPG consumption, some 85-90% goes into households as cooking gas, while the remaining is for commercial and industrial purposes. Curbing industrial and commercial uses would mean that the daily import requirement has come down to around 30,000 tonne from 55,000 tonne.

The cargo of Shivalik and Nanda Devi, two LPG tankers that left the Strait of Hormuz with naval escort and have currently docked in India, will be adequate for three days of imports, as opposed to two days of imports in the past.

About half a dozen LPG tankers bound for India are still in the west of Strait of Hormuz. These carry a total of some 3 lakh tonne of LPG, according to the government. The Indian LPG system works on a continuous supply cycle since there is little long-term storage. The government is working to diversify sources of LPG, too, since most of the supplies were coming from the Persian Gulf in the past. "There is no real substitute for Gulf LPG in the Indian market. While alternative supplies are available, they come with longer shipping times and cannot provide immediate relief," said Manish Sejwal, Senior Vice President, Commodity Markets - Oil, Rystad Energy, an energy information agency based in Norway.

Qatar to west coast of India takes some four days on an LPG carrier. And a round voyage takes a little more than a week.

LPG ships are available for bringing in the fuel to India. "VLGC freight rates have not risen as sharply as those for crude or LNG carriers, partly because only about 4% of the global VLGC fleet was stranded west of Hormuz," said Mr. Sejwal. Meanwhile, two LPG vessels of each around 24,000 to 25,000 tonnes cargo are expected to arrive at Visakhapatnam between March 26 and 30. On March 7, a 24,000-tonne LPG vessel had docked Visakhapatnam. Ennore terminal, which sees two or three LPG ship calls a month is expecting an LPG ship on March 21.

(With inputs from Saptaparno Ghosh)

Ministry of Planning, Niti Aayog get House panel rap for 'poor planning' of finances

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance pulled up the Ministry of Planning for not "planning" its finances better. The committee found that despite spending less than half of the budget allocated to it, the Ministry was allocated ever-higher amounts over the past three financial years.

In its latest report tabled in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the committee called for "more realistic" planning and financial management by the Ministry. The government's nodal think-tank, the Niti Aayog, operates through the Ministry.

The committee also noted "flaws in planning" by Niti Aayog when it comes to its finances.

Under-utilisation

"After overall scrutiny of estimates, allocations and utilisation of the budget grants during financial years under reference, the Committee are of the view that there has been continuous underutilisation of the earmarked funds by the Ministry of Planning," the Standing Committee's report said.

The committee noted that the Ministry sought ₹1,203.38 crore of funds for the upcoming financial year 2026-27, which is about 22% higher than the ₹1,006.06 crore as per the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2025-26.

"However, the Actuals for the FY 2023-24 were at ₹290.81 crore against a BE of ₹824.39 crore, which is around 35% of the BE," the committee noted. "Likewise, the Actuals for the FY 2024-25 were only ₹282.61 crore, against a BE of ₹837.26 crore i.e. just about 34% in percentage terms."

The committee noted that this situation seems to have improved in 2025-26 but also said that the actual utilisation amount is only slightly more than half the amount budgeted.

"With only a narrow window of two months remaining in the FY under reference, the Committee are not very optimistic," it added.

The committee said that **the committee called for a "more realistic" financial management by the Ministry** despite this continuous under-utilisation, the BE of the Ministry grew 20% and 22%, respectively, in the preceding years.

"The Committee in their previous reports have time and again emphasised the need for more realistic planning and financial management for optimal use of available financial resources," the report said.

"The Committee therefore strongly recommend Ministry of Planning to ensure that 2026-27 budget is utilised effectively and to avoid any idling and blocking of funds in the non-responsive Heads."

"The Committee hope that the Ministry of Planning would be more fiscally prudent in assessment of their projected expenditure and targets in the future," it added.

Dismal implementation

The committee said that its analysis of Niti Aayog's Quarterly Expenditure Plan (QEP) reveals a "persistent and significant" underutilisation. The data in the report shows that, in 2023-24 and 2024-25, actual spending was approximately 35% and 33% of the total BE, respectively.

"This indicates flaws in planning as there is dismal implementation of the plans on the ground," the Committee said. "While FY 2025-26 shows a positive trend with improved utilisation (56.46%), the surge in Q4 expenditure remains a concern."

It said that a projected spending of ₹139.17 crore in Q4 of 2025-26 "appears to be a disproportionate rush to exhaust funds", and also risks violating the Central government's 15% monthly spending cap.

"The Committee are of the firm view that there is need to adhere to strict Quarterly Expenditure Percentage norms and NITI Aayog should conduct internal reviews to synchronise administrative sanctions with the QEP," the report said.

Expedite pending, new gas pipeline projects, Centre tells States, UTs

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The Centre has written to State governments and Union Territories, urging them to expedite disposal of pending applications for laying city gas distribution pipelines and approve new applications within 24 hours, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) told reporters here at an inter-ministerial briefing on Tuesday.

Ms. Sharma also informed that the Centre had urged the respective governments to waive road restoration and permission charges and relax working conditions, among others.

These actions are part of the government's broader objective to create a supportive infrastructure to prompt consumers for a switch to piped natural gas (PNG), to ease pressure off liquified petroleum gas (LPG).

According to data from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), as of September end last year, it had authorised laying of approximately 34,200 km of natural gas pipelines. Of this, 25,293 km had been made operational with 9,954 km under construction.

Charges waived

The regulator said considering the "prevailing geopolitical crisis" it had decided to waive the imbalance charges applicable to relevant entities, shippers and consumers until June 30, with immediate effect.

"This waiver is being allowed as a temporary relief measure in light of the extraordinary circumstances arising out of the current geopolitical situation in the Gulf countries, which has adversely impacted supply conditions and operational balancing," the notice read. "During the aforesaid period, no imbalance charges shall be levied on concerned entities/shipper in respect of gas scheduling/offtake/transportation/balancing subject to compliance with all other terms and conditions, regulations, and operational requirements," it added.

Infosys hits 3-year low on AI fears, war

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Oracle, Wipro and Persistent Systems slid by about 2%.

Software services firm Infosys Ltd. fell almost 3% to ₹1,215 on the Nifty50 on Tuesday, marking the lowest level since April 2023 on Artificial Intelligence (AI) fears and rising crude prices which could halt the rate-cutting cycle of global central banks.

The stock closed at ₹1,234, or 1.35% lower.

Infosys was not alone as Oracle, Wipro and Persistent Systems slid by about 2% on Tuesday with the overall NiftyIT index sliding almost 1%.

U.S.-based AI firm Anthropic has been consistently releasing multiple updates to its AI tool Claude with features and plug-ins that can perform tasks such as writing equity research reports, legal reports and even market research reports in addition to coding and creating new applications without human intervention.

Job loss fears

This has stoked fears among Indian IT staff and investors alike on potential job losses and hiring cuts.

However, some industry veterans opine the IT stock sell-off was an overreaction and that Anthropic would not spell doomsday.

Speaking at an event, CIO of PPFAS AMC Rajiv Thakkar said a further correction in IT stocks may make valuations attractive.

"Agentic AI is a developing theme with implications still debated. In the near term, this shows up as caution, longer decision cycles and selective pressure on base business. Over time, it could contribute to a broader reshaping of value pools, but the timing and magnitude remain uncertain," as per a Kotak Institutional Research note.

Renault relaunches Duster, bets on hybrids

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Renault re-introduced Renault Duster in India, marking not just the return of a once-popular SUV but a broader strategic reset built around hybrid technology and a multi-powertrain approach. The third-generation Duster is priced from about ₹10.3 lakh (ex-showroom).

Malabar Gold set to invest ₹1,580 cr. in showrooms

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, a jewellery retailer has planned to open 20 new showrooms before March 31, marking one of the fastest showroom rollouts in the country.

With this, the total global showroom count of the firm will rise to 445 across 14 countries. The expansion entails a total investment of ₹1,580 crore and is likely to generate over 725 jobs, the company said.

IRDAI moots public insurance registry

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

New step: PIR is envisioned as consent-driven, legally compliant digital infrastructure covering policy lifecycle. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) is proposing a Public Insurance Registry to consolidate insurance data across stakeholders, cut information asymmetry, improve fraud detection and enable data-driven regulatory oversight.

Crucial step

The proposed PIR is a crucial step towards modernising information architecture of the insurance sector, Chairman Ajay Seth told stakeholders discussion on PIR and e-marketplace Bima Sugam organised by IRDAI at New Delhi.

IRDAI said the PIR is envisioned as a consent-driven, legally compliant digital infrastructure covering entire policy lifecycle from issuance to claims, grievance redressal and dispute resolution. It will be a structured, interoperable information infrastructure.

Whole Time Member Deepak Sood spoke on the economic and business case of the PIR and the value proposition for all stakeholders.

Besides senior leadership from insurers, invited stakeholders from the insurance ecosystem attended the meeting.

Key expectations from the insurance sector were discussed, including compliance readiness, data governance standards, cybersecurity safeguards and role of interoperable digital infrastructure in modernising the insurance ecosystem, IRDAI said in a release on the meeting.

The need for alignment between the PIR and Bima Sugam to enable seamless access to insurance policies, enhance service delivery, and redefine the overall customer experience was also discussed.

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ଶକ୍ତି ସଂଚାରଣ ନିଗମ ଲିଃ
(ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଏକ ଉପକ୍ରମ)
OPTCL Lifeline of Odisha
ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
Regd. Office: OPTCL Tech Tower, Janpath, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751007

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-Tender No.	Tender Description:	Estimated Cost
CPC-69/2025-26	Bids are invited from reputed manufactures in two part bidding system for **Lot-I:** Supply of 310 Nos. of 132kV surge arrester.	Rs. 1,29,86,324.32/-
	Lot-II: Supply of 450 Nos. of 33kV surge arrester. **Last Date & Time of Submission of Bid: 15.04.2026 upto 12:30 Hr.**	Rs. 82,71,174.6/-
CPC-70/2025-26	Engineering, supply, Installation and Testing & commissioning works for "Construction of 220kV SC line in parallel to the existing line through underground cable for 400/220kV, 500MVA ICT at New-Duburi GSS" on Turnkey Contract Basis in e-tendering mode only. . **Last Date & Time of Submission of Bid: 06.04.2026 upto 12:00 P.M.**	Rs. 4,47,76,622/-

Complete set of bidding documents are available at **www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL** and **www.optcl.co.in**.
/optcl.odisha /optcl_odisha HIPR-81/2025-26

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MAIDUGURI

Suspected suicide attacks kill 23, injure more than 100 in Nigeria

REUTERS

Coordinated explosions staged by suspected suicide bombers tore through a busy market and other areas in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, killing at least 23 people and wounding 108 others, police said on Tuesday. The military blamed the blasts on suspected Boko Haram militants. AFP

HAVANA

Embargo-hit Cuba restores power in most parts after latest blackout

AFP

Cuba was gradually restoring power on Tuesday after a nationwide blackout, the latest setback amid an oil blockade imposed by the U.S. in an effort to pressure the communist authorities. Cuba did not specify what caused the latest power outage, but said as of Tuesday morning two-thirds of the country had electricity again. AFP

BOGOTA

Petro points finger at Ecuador over bombing near Colombian border

AFP

Colombian President Gustavo Petro accused Ecuador on Monday of bombing an area near the country's border, adding that he was awaiting details to avoid "going to war." Colombia has been locked in a trade dispute with its South American neighbour headed by Daniel Noboa, a staunch ally of U.S. President Donald Trump. AFP

JUBA

South Sudan conflict pushes close to 100,000 into Ethiopia: UNICEF

AFP

An order by South Sudan's Army to evacuate the Opposition-held town of Akobo earlier this month pushed an estimated 100,000 people to flee across the border into Ethiopia, UNICEF said on Tuesday. A 2018 deal between President Salva Kiir and his long-time rival Riek Machar has been unravelling since 2025. AFP

U.S. counterterrorism chief resigns over Trump's Iran war, blames Israel

Iran posed no imminent threat to the United States, says director of the National Counterterrorism Center; the top official calls out Israel and its American lobby for pressuring Washington into a war; Trump insists Iran was a tremendous threat

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

Growing fallout: Joe Kent's departure reflects unease within President Donald Trump's base about the war. AP

Joe Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced his resignation on Tuesday, citing his concerns about the justification for military strikes in Iran and saying he "cannot in good conscience" back the [Donald] Trump administration's war.

"Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby," Mr. Kent said in a statement posted on social media.

Mr. Kent was confirmed to his post last July on a 52-44 vote. As head of the National Counterterrorism Center, he was in charge of an agency tasked with analysing and detecting terrorist threats.

His resignation reflects unease within Mr. Trump's base about the war. Earlier this month, House Speaker Mike Johnson suggested that the White House believed Israel was determined to act on its own, leaving the Republican President with a "very difficult decision."

Trump reacts

In an exchange with reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday, Mr. Trump said he always thought Mr. Kent was "weak on security" and if someone in his administration did not believe Iran was a threat, "we don't want those people."

"They're not smart people, or they're not savvy people," Mr. Trump said. "Iran was a tremendous threat."

Democrats opposed Mr. Kent's confirmation, pointing to his past ties to far-right figures. But following Mr. Kent's resignation, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said Mr. Kent's concerns about the war in Iran were justified.

"I strongly disagree with many of the positions he has espoused over the years" Mr. Warner said. "But on this point, he is right: There was no credible evidence of an imminent threat from Iran that would justify rushing the United States into another war of choice in the Middle East [West Asia]."

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, CIA Director John Ratcliffe and FBI Director Kash Patel are scheduled to testify later this week on global threats to the U.S.

Israel strikes Tehran, Beirut; Baghdad's Green Zone hit

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Under fire: Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted an area in Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday. AFP

Israel launched a wave of strikes on Tehran and Beirut on Tuesday while attacks in Baghdad drew neighbouring Iraq deeper into the conflict in West Asia that has sparked economic turmoil across the globe.

The Iranian capital was hit by what the Israeli military said were strikes on "terror regime infrastructure".

The war, now in its third week, has killed hundreds and quickly spread to include Iranian strikes on Gulf nations and Israeli bombardment of Lebanon.

Lebanese state media reported on Tuesday that Israeli strikes hit a residential building in Beirut's southern suburbs, a stronghold of the pro-Iranian armed group Hezbollah. Authorities said more than one million people have registered as displaced since March 2.

The regional war has also steadily pulled Iraq further into the fighting, after the country has long been a proxy battleground between the U.S and Iran.

A drone and rocket attack targeted the U.S. embassy in Baghdad on Tuesday, while a strike killed four people at a house reportedly hosting Iranian advisors. A drone attack sparked a fire at a luxury hotel frequented by foreign diplomats in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone.

Iraq Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani denounced the attacks, calling them threats to his country's "security and stability".

UN condemns displacement of Palestinians in West Bank

Associated Press
GENEVA

UN human rights office raises concerns of 'ethnic cleansing' with over 36,000 displaced in a year

The U.N. human rights office on Tuesday expressed concerns about possible "ethnic cleansing," denouncing an acceleration of Israeli settlements and displacements of thousands of Palestinians in large parts of the occupied West Bank that has grown "more relentless" in recent months.

A new report from the office of Volker Turk, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, covers a year-long period through the end of October and warns of expanded settlements in large parts of the West Bank and the forced displacement of more than 36,000 Palestinians.

Since then, "the pace of the concerted efforts by the Israeli government to seize as much Palestinian land as possible – with as few Palestinians in it as possible – is only becoming more relentless," said Ajith Sunghay, the head of the rights office in occupied Palestinian areas.

Mr. Sunghay said Israeli security forces "have continued to kill Palestinians with impunity," have launched daily raids across the West Bank, and increased movement restrictions in the territory that have impeded access to health care, jobs, education and other basic services. "Yet Israeli settlers are roaming free with complete impunity, often armed, forcing Palestinian family after Palestinian family off their lands," Mr. Sunghay said.

Mr. Turk, in a statement, alleged that Israeli authorities were "playing the central role in directing, participating in or enabling this conduct".

Much of the displacement of thousands has taken place in the northern West Bank, where Israel launched a broad military offensive in early 2025.

The report says the displacement "appears to indicate a concerted Israeli policy of mass forcible transfer throughout the occupied territory, aimed at permanent displacement, raising concerns of ethnic cleansing."

Trump asks China to delay Xi summit as Iran war rages

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China said on Tuesday it had "noted" clarifications from the U.S. about the reasons for a possible delay to President Donald Trump's planned trip.

Mr. Trump was expected to visit China at the end of March, but said on Monday he had asked Beijing to delay his summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping due to the war in West Asia.

Mr. Trump had earlier suggested his visit could depend on China helping to secure the Strait of Hormuz. But China acknowledged Mr. Trump's request on Tuesday, in a statement rejecting any connection to the issues surrounding Hormuz.

'Kurds seek a democratic Iranian state; we do not fight other powers' wars'

Stanly Johny

Peyman Viyan

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), an armed Kurdish militant group in Iran, said the Kurds would not fight other powers' wars and said the Iranian state needs to change its behaviour or else it is heading towards collapse.

The PJAK, which is aligned with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey, has sought greater autonomy for the Kurdish region in Iran ('Eastern Kurdistan').

The group recently came under the spotlight as U.S. President Donald Trump said he would welcome Kurdish militants in Iran joining the war against the Iranian state. The U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28, by striking Tehran and killing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mr. Trump later ruled out Kurdish involvement but there were reports in American media that Iranian Kurdish groups were getting support from the U.S. and Israel.

"We do not act according to any other power. We will do what is necessary and we will make the necessary decisions accordingly," PJAK co-chair Peyman Viyan told *The Hindu* in an interview when asked about Mr. Trump's comments.

"Of course, we have relations with all powers. But as the parties of East Kurdistan, we will do what serves the interests of our people," said Peyman Viyan.

Asked whether the Kurdish groups were getting support from Israel and the U.S., she said: "No one has helped us. We have been leading a struggle against the Iranian regime for years with our inherent strength."

The PJAK, which has fought intermittent armed struggle against the state, said, "time has come for the Iranian state to change... If it does not try to change itself and insist on its policies, it will be changed in some way." She added that the PJAK wants "a Democratic Republic of Iran. A democracy will guarantee the rights of all peoples. Iran is home for all of us. Not just for some."

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public is hereby notified that my clients **Mr. K.A. Suresh & Mr. K.A. Nagaraja** have lost/ misplaced the original Allotment letter No.038094 dated 03-February-2004 issued by BDA in favor of **Mr. Ravi Prakash, S/o Siddappa** in respect of Site No.630 measuring 6X9 mtrs, situated at IV H Block, F.E of BSK VI Stage, Bangalore. Regarding this they have given a police complaint (FIR No. 2059488/2026) on 12.02.2026.

Founders of the said original allotment letter kindly contact the undersigned within 05 (Five) days from the date of this notice.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 17.03.2026
Sd/-
Chandar K Vittal, Advocate
#130, 8th Main road, AGS Layout, Arehalli, Bengaluru-560061.
Contact No: 72594 95959

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-tender Notice, Date 13.03.2026 Signal & Telecom (GSU) Branch Tender Notice No. Kota-SnT-GSU-PMS-2026-02

Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (GSU), West Central Railway, Near Railway Microwave Tower, Kota Jn. Rajasthan-324002 for and on behalf of President of India invites E-tender in the prescribed form for the following work. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored., **Tender No.-** Kota-SnT-GSU-PMS-2026-02, **Name of work-** Providing project management services for 1.Survey, design, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of trackside KAVACH equipment at stations/LC Gates locations including erection of towers and associated works required for KAVACH in Kota-Ruthiyai section and Sogaria-Kota C Section (166 Rkm) of Kota division of West Central Railway. This also includes supply, trenching, duct laying, blowing, splicing, termination, etc. of 24 & 48 fiber QFC with route diversity wherever required., 2. Provision of KAVACH on Low Density Railway Network Route of KOTA-COR, KCCN-SGAC and GQL N-GQL W Section (170 RKM) of Kota Division over WCR., 3. Provision of KAVACH on Low Density Railway Network Route of KOTA Division on RMA- BRRG Section [165 RKM] along with 4x48 fiber OFC., **Cost of NIT/Work-** Rs. 8,66,12,098.00/-, **Cost of Tender form-** Rs. 0.00/-, **Bid Security-** Rs. 5,83,100.00/-, **Completion period -** 60 (Sixty Months) including Monsoon, **Last date & time of submission of tender -** 13.04.2026 at 15.00 hrs., **Website address -** www.ireps.gov.in.

Sd./-
Dy. Chief S&T Engineer. (GSU-II)
West Central Railway, Kota

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

Government of Karnataka
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEERING DIVISION, KALABURAGI

No: EE/PRED/KLB/TS-5/TENDER/2025-26/6720 Dated: 16.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through E-Procurement Two Cover System)

1) Name of Work: 1. Repairs to road from Elenavadagi Village to Bolani Village in Aland Taluka Indent No.25181, 2. Repairs to C.D. from Padsawali to Hebali village in Aland Taluka Indent No. 25184, 3. Improvements to Road from Tarkaspet to Gola Nayak Tanda in Chittapur taluka indent No.24703, 4. Repairs to road from Malkood village to Laxmi temple in Chittapur Taluka District Kalaburagi Under 5054 Indent No.24900/CALL-2, 5.Construction of bridge and Improvements to joining road in Bilkal village of Sedam Taluka Indent No. 17826/Call-2, 6. Improvements to Road from Hulgol approach road (balance work) and Improvements to Road from Mudhol-Medak main road towards Gaddameda Tanda in Sedam Taluka Indent No. 17821 /Call-2 (for CAT-I Bidders only) 7. Re-construction of road from Beernalli village to Arebomnalli village ch 0.00 to 4.50km of VR -No.300 in Sedam Taluka Indent No.25309, 8. Construction of approach Road and Drain at Kukkunda village in Sedam Taluka and Construction of CC Road and Drian to main road Habal T Village in Sedam Taluka Indent No.24508 under CMIDP for the year 2025-26, 9. Construction of Retaining Wall and Formation of Road from Hunuman temple to Kotiling main entrance at Matamanikeshwari hill of Yanagundi village in Sedam Taluka Indent No.24500 under CMIDP for the year 2025-26 , 2) Head of account : **5054 for the year 2024-25 & 2025-26 CMIDP for the year 2025-26,** 3) Amount put to tender: Minimum **Rs.62,93,017.02,** Maximum **Rs.2,46,76,317.32.** 4) Class of Contractor : Class-III, II and above, 5) Issue of Blank Tender Documents : **13.03.2026 to 07.04.2026 up to 4.00 pm,** 6) Tender Form Fee : **as per KPPP Norms,** 7) EMD Fee: Minimum **Rs. 84,000.00,** Maximum **Rs. 3,70,500.00,** 8) Receipt of completed tender documents : **13.03.2026 to 07.04.2026 upto 4.00 pm**, 9) Technical Bid opening date: **08.04.2026 after 4.00 pm.** 10) Financial Bid opening Date: **10.04.2026 after 11.00 am.** 11) For more details contact : Office of the Executive Engineer, Panchayat Raj Engineering Division, Opp Karnataka Grameen Bank (PKGB) Head office Kusnoor road, Rajapur, Kalaburagi 12) website address : www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in

DIPR/Kalaburagi/1184/
Deshpande Publicity/2025-26/

Sd/- **Executive Engineer,**
Panchayat Raj Engineering Division, Kalaburagi

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar
Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in

IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-95/3965/2025-26 Date: 16.03.2026

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item Rate Tenders under two cover bid system is invited for the work mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the the following works as per the schedule given below:

Name of the Works : 1) Construction of Rigid Pavement (Cement Concrete) Roads in 24m wide 1st cross road (Balance length) & 15m wide 3rd Main Road & Balance length of 15m wide 2nd cross (canal road) construction of RCC Side drains & RCC Culvert, construction of pump house and laying of Water supply pipeline at Sarathi Kurubarahalli 1st Stage Industrial Area, Harihara Taluk, Davangere District (2nd call).

2) Upgradation of roads, construction of Rcc side drains SWD & Jungle Clearance & De-Silting of drains in Kunigal Industrial Area Phase-1 & Phase-2, Kunigal Taluk & Tumakuru District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **01.04.2026** upto **4.30 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/6298/Zen/2025-26

NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT

'First game is on March 31, we'll ensure we play our last on May 31'

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Punjab Kings batter Shashank Singh is determined to help his team reach its second successive Indian Premier League final. "We know that we will be playing our first match on March 31 (against Gujarat Titans in New Chandigarh). We will make sure we play our season's last match on May 31 (date of the summit clash)," said Shashank.

DOWN UNDER UP NORTH

Strong Australian presence in the Punjab Kings camp

FILE PHOTO

There will once again be a strong Australian presence in the PBKS camp. While Marcus Stoinis, Cooper Connolly *(in pic)*, Mitchell Owen, Ben Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett are in the playing squad, head coach Ricky Ponting, assistant coach Brad Haddin and fast-bowling coach James Hopes belong to the backroom set-up.

BIG BLOW

KKR fast bowler Harshit set to miss major part of IPL 2026

FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana is set to miss a major part of IPL 2026 after undergoing knee surgery last month. The 24-year-old, who suffered a knee strain during India's T20 World Cup warm-up fixture against South Africa, is undergoing rehabilitation with no confirmation about his return by the BCCI medical team.

TRULY ADMIRABLE

Ashwin all praise for Gambhir's team-over-individuals approach

FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

I like Gautam (Gambhir). Many people may have different opinions about him, but he is someone who always puts the team ahead of individuals. That is something I admire. There is more to Indian cricket than just a couple of people — R. Ashwin on Team India head coach Gambhir's style of functioning.

Shreyas' Kings have the firepower to go the distance

The Punjab willow-wielders are expected to stick to their slam-bang approach; the plethora of skilful all-rounders in the PBKS ranks will provide a happy headache for head coach Ponting

S. Shrivathsan

Promising: Punjab Kings will have high expectations from its Indian talent. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

No leader from the Punjab Kings dynasty has conquered the Indian Premier League. Which is why Shreyas Iyer, the current chief of the PBKS army, had rallied his troops with a war cry moments after losing the final battle in the previous IPL tussle.

"The job is still half done. We have to lift the trophy next year," Shreyas had said after being beaten to the crown by Royal Challengers Bengaluru skipper Rajat Patidar.

With the top prize again up for grabs in the upcoming iteration of the T20 league, Shreyas & Co. will enter the battleground with a single-minded focus on capturing PBKS' maiden title.

Having retained the core of the crew that drove the team to the summit clash last season – 21 players were kept hold of while Pravin Dubey was bought back – the Punjab outfit has the resources to reign supreme.

Shreyas and head coach Ricky Ponting – the men who call the shots – are proponents of playing a fearless brand of cricket, so the batting wing is expected to stick to its slam-bang approach.

The willow-wielders, however, must pull out all stops to avoid the 'second season syndrome' after having raised the bar to take IPL 2025 by storm.

The captain will once again have to act as the glue that holds the batting contingent together, considering the lack of international players it possesses – in a tournament where rivals take a yard when given an inch, top-level experience is like gold dust.

Shreyas may have to double up as an enforcer after the departure of Josh Inglis.

The challenge in front of him could be bigger than it appears since the 31-year-old has not been involved in enough high-quality action in the months leading up to the league.

Same is the case with leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, the side's biggest wicket-taking weapon and the most experienced member of the bowling band.

Chahal, who is the IPL's chart-topper with 221 scalps, has been on the sidelines for a majority of the last four months, but the team would hope that he gets his mojo back to weave his middle-overs magic.

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh could be another point of difference for the franchise that calls him 'one of its own'.

All-rounders Marcus Stoinis, Azmatullah Omarzai, Marco Jansen and Harpreet Brar provide not only strength in batting depth but also a happy bowling selection headache.

To last the distance, the PBKS forces should fire on all cylinders.

IPL-19 COUNTDOWN

Punjab Kings

FINALIST: 2014, 2025

OVERALL NUMBERS

Matches	Won	Lost	NR
263	122	140	1

BY OPPONENT

TEAM	M	W	L	NR
CSK	32	16	16	0
DC	34	17	17	0
GT	6	3	3	0
KKR	35	13	21	1
LSG	6	3	3	0
MI	34	17	17	0
RCB	37	18	19	0
RR	30	13	17	0
SRH	24	7	17	0

Punjab Kings' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (10), PWI (6), GL (4), RPS (4) and KTK (1)

PBKS' 2026 LEAGUE CAMPAIGN*

March 31	vs. GT	New Chandigarh	7.30 p.m.
April 3	vs. CSK	Chennai	7.30 p.m.
April 6	vs. KKR	Kolkata	7.30 p.m.
April 11	vs. SRH	New Chandigarh	3.30 p.m.

*announced so far

THE SQUAD

Shreyas Iyer (Capt.), Prabhsimran Singh, Priyansh Arya, Harnoor Pannu, Nehal Wadhera, Shashank Singh, Vishnu Vinod, Pyla Avinash, Marcus Stoinis, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mitchell Owen, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge, Cooper Connolly, Marco Jansen, Ben Dwarshuis, Harpreet Brar, Xavier Bartlett, Arshdeep Singh, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Pravin Dubey, Vishal Nishad and Lockie Ferguson.

MIRACLE MAN

Shreyas Iyer

THE India international's tactical acumen and batting mastery will be key to the Punjab side's chances. His exemplary leadership skills will come in handy if and when the squad, comprising many uncapped players, wades through tough times during the season. The upgraded version of his batting game, which was on full display in the previous season, has been posing plenty of problems for opposition bowlers. In essence, PBKS does well when Shreyas does well.

COMPILED BY **G. PRASAD & S. SHRIVATHSAN**

Trust in team: Ponting and Shreyas will have the core of the crew that drove PBKS to the final last year. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Irfan confident of Shreyas repeating last season's heroics

ANI
MUMBAI

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan has expressed optimism that Punjab Kings (PBKS) skipper Shreyas Iyer will be able to replicate his last season's stupendous run in IPL 2026.

Irfan feels while there is a spot for Shreyas in the Indian T20I set-up, the right-hander is a "proven player" who does not need to use the IPL to present his case for a return to T20I team.

After PBKS' runner-up finish last year, the expectations are high with Shreyas and head coach Ricky Ponting forming a powerful leadership duo.

Last season, Shreyas finished as his side's top run-getter and overall sixth-highest with 604 runs in 17 innings at an average of 50.33 and a strike rate of 175.07, including six fifties. Having won the IPL with Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) as captain in 2024 and after taking PBKS to the final, Shreyas is one cracking season away from a potential return to India's T20I set-up.

Speaking on *JioHotstar*, Irfan pointed out how "Shreyas has improved by leaps and bounds".

"I am not sure that Shreyas would be thinking of using the IPL as a stage to prove himself for a comeback into the T20I side. Shreyas is a proven player. He has done really well in T20 cricket for Punjab Kings and has done really well for Team India as well. He is a very important player in one-day cricket. I think there is a place for him in the T20I set-up and he is aware of that.

"He has improved by leaps and bounds. I am really excited to see if he can replicate the same performance this season as well. I am confident he will," said Irfan.

Jayawardene eager to witness Rohit's 'newer version' in action

Shayan Acharya
MUMBAI

Stronger and sharper: Jayawardene says Rohit is much fitter and very committed. X@MIPALTAN

Rohit Sharma may not have featured in T20 cricket for nearly a year, but as he gears up for another Indian Premier League season, Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene is expecting a "newer version" of the veteran opener.

"He (Rohit) has done a lot of work behind the scenes. He had a lot of skill work done in the last week. He joined us on the first day of our training camp. He looked very good in the nets. This is a newer version of Rohit as well –much fitter – and very committed. So, I'm looking forward to him leading us from the top," Jayawardene said on the sidelines of the final of the MI Junior on Tuesday.

Rohit, who retired from T20Is in 2024 after leading India to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup title, remains a key figure for MI. In IPL 2025, he scored 418 runs in 15 matches.

Meanwhile, the head coach isn't concerned about India's T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav's form. Despite the team's success, Suryakumar endured a relatively quiet campaign, scoring 242 runs in the global showpiece. "SKY is not worried too much about his form. He's a class operator," Jayawardene said.

"He's always going to get there. He contributed when it mattered. Yes, consistency is something that he would want to improve. But leading the team the way he led the team [was incredible]. There were a couple of tough decisions they had to make during the season and in the World Cup, which SKY did. Hats off to him. I'm sure he'll have a good break and join the camp with a smiling face," he said.

While interacting with the youngsters after the final, Jayawardene said: "This is something we thrive on, scouting young boys and girls. This year, too, we have identified some really good talent".

RBI women stun PSPB for their third title in four years

TABLE TENNIS

Amol Karhadkar
INDORE

The Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) men's team clinched its 24th consecutive title, defeating West Bengal in the final of the 87th inter-State and senior National table tennis championship, sponsored by Ultimate Table Tennis, on Tuesday.

However, the highlight of the day was the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) women's team scripting a remarkable comeback to edge past PSPB in a thrilling final at the Abhay Prashal Indoor Stadium, securing its third title in four years. In a contest that lasted over three hours, Sreeja Akula – India's highest-ranked paddler – defeated Yashaswini Ghorpade in the deciding fifth game of the final rubber to seal the victory.

PSPB had looked set for a double when Taneesha Kotecha stunned Sreeja in the opening match, and Yashaswini comfortably beat Ayhika Mukherjee to give her team a 2-0 lead.

Diya Chitale, the reigning National champion, found herself trailing 1-6 in the second game against teenager Syndrela Das after losing the opener. However, Diya turned the tide with aggressive play, countering Syndrela's sidespin returns to keep RBI in contention. Ayhika then levelled the tie by dominating Taneesha to force a decider. In the final match, Sreeja held her nerve, unleashing her trademark down-the-line forehand topspin winners at crucial moments to clinch the title.

All smiles: The victorious RBI squad, including Diya, Nikhat, Ayhika, Priyadarshini, coach Chiranjeev Deka and Sreeja, pose for a selfie after receiving its winnings. AMOL KARHADKAR

The men's final, as expected, was largely one-sided. However, veteran Harmeet Desai was tested by left-hander Bodhisatwa Chaudhury. After leading 2-0 and 9-3, Harmeet appeared to lose focus, conceding eight consecutive points to drop the game. Bodhisatwa carried the momentum forward to level the match at two games apiece, but Harmeet's experience ultimately prevailed as he won the decider to secure both the match and PSPB's title.

The individual events began late on Tuesday evening, with Swastika Ghosh pulling out of the category due to medical reasons.

The results: Team Championship final: Men: PSPB bt West Bengal 3-0
(Payas Jain bt Ankur Bhattacharjee 12-10, 11-4, 1-11, 11-9; Manav Thakkar bt Aniket Sen Choudhury 15-13, 11-5, 11-5; Harmeet Desai bt Bodhisatwa Chaudhury 11-4, 11-2, 9-11, 6-11, 11-8).

Positions three to 10: Telangana, Railways Sports Promotion Board, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, and Punjab.

Women: RBI bt PSPB 3-2
(Sreeja Akula lost to Taneesha Kotecha 12-10, 12-10, 7-11, 13-15, 4-11; Ayhika Mukherjee lost to Yashswini Ghorpade 7-11, 5-11, 8-11, Diya Chitale bt Syndrela Das 12-14, 12-10, 11-7, 14-12, Ayhika bt Taneesha 11-7, 11-4, 11-5; Sreeja bt Yashaswini 11-5, 4-11, 11-9, 12-14, 11-6).

Positions three to 10: Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, and Haryana.

INBRIEF

FIFA signs 'game-changing partnership' with YouTube

YouTube made a World Cup deal with FIFA on Tuesday that lets rights-holding broadcasters stream game action live on the video platform that offers global access to young viewers. FIFA announced a "game-changing partnership" that encourages World Cup rights holders to broadcast the first 10 minutes of games during the June 11-July 19 tournament – in effect an appetiser encouraging young fans then to watch on traditional channels such as network TV. In addition, broadcasters "will be able to stream a select number of matches in full on their YouTube channel, engaging global audiences and promoting where to watch more of the competition," FIFA said. The value of the deal for FIFA was not disclosed. FIFA also pledged to share some of its World Cup archive on YouTube "including full length past matches and many more iconic moments in the sport's history".

Four more race days added to Hyderabad Winter Season

The Stewards Of the Hyderabad Race Club (HRC), at their meeting held on Tuesday (March 17), have resolved to include four more race days to the Hyderabad Winter Season 2025-26. The dates are: March 28 and 31 and April 4 and 5.

LIVE TELECAST

Squash: Indian Open, FanCode, 12.45 p.m.
Europa League: Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 9 p.m.
Champions League: Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 11.15 p.m.; Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 1.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Wolves' fightback frustrates Brentford

The away team, almost certainly on its way for relegation, shows tremendous spirit in coming back from two goals down to dent the host's chances of making the Champions League

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Wolves staged an impressive fightback from two goals down against Brentford as the Premier League's bottom club rescued a 2-2 draw thanks to Tolu Arokodare's late equaliser on Monday.

Rob Edwards' side trailed to goals from Michael Kayode and Igor Thiago at the Gtech Community Stadium.

But Adam Armstrong got one back just before half-time and Nigeria striker Arokodare snatched Wolves' leveller in the closing stages.

Wolves is unbeaten in its last three league games following its shock wins over Aston Villa and Liverpool.

It remains almost certain to be relegated, sitting 12 points from safety with only seven games left.

But if Wolves does slip into the Championship, it can take heart from its refusal to go down with a whimper.

"It's hard to say when you've been 2-0 down but I felt we could have won the game," Edwards said.

"It shows the fight, the courage, the quality, the spirit that's in the group.

"Even though we're in this position, it actually feels united together."

It was a painful result for seventh-placed Brentford, which blew the chance to bolster its unexpected bid to qualify for Europe.

Keith Andrews' men are three points behind sixth-placed Chelsea and four adrift of fifth-placed Liverpool after failing to secure a win that would have catapulted them into contention for a Champions League place.

Drawing level: Arokodare, second right, scores Wolves' second against Brentford. AP

Tipped as relegation candidates at the start of this season, Brentford have enjoyed a remarkable campaign after losing manager Thomas Frank and forwards Bryan Mbeumo and Yoanne Wissa last summer.

But in the space of seven days it has crashed out of the FA Cup at lowly West Ham and squandered a strong position against Wolves to endanger its memorable season.

"When you're talking about us in the same breath as Chelsea, that's obviously pretty good considering there's only eight games left," Andrews said.

"But the reality is we could have produced more tonight.

"We need to be honest with that and look at ourselves."

The results: Premier League: Brentford 2 (Kayode 22, Thiago 37) drew with Wolves 2 (Armstrong 44, Arokodare 77).
LaLiga: Rayo Vallecano 1 (Ciss 90+4) drew with Levante 1 (Espi 41).
Serie A: Cremonese 1 (Okereke 57) lost to Fiorentina 4 (Parisi 25, Piccoli 32, Dodo 49, Gudmundsson 70).

Iran negotiating with FIFA to move its World Cup games from the U.S. to Mexico

Agencies
MEXICO CITY

Iran's Embassy in Mexico on Tuesday said the country is negotiating with FIFA to move Iran's World Cup matches from the U.S. to Mexico after President Donald Trump discouraged the team from attending the tournament, citing safety concerns.

It was unclear whether such talks are happening with FIFA, which did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

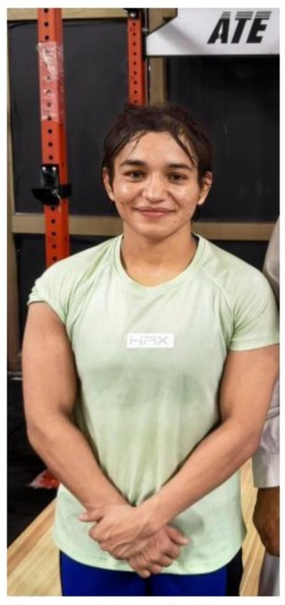
Iranian officials have previously said it is up to FIFA and the U.S. to keep the team safe during the World Cup. The Embassy posted a statement attributed to Iranian football federation president Mehdi Taj saying Iran wants to move its group-stage matches to Mexico to ensure the safety of players and officials.

"We are currently negotiating with FIFA to hold Iran's matches in the World Cup in Mexico," the statement said.

Mexico ready to host

Meanwhile, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said that her country would have no problem hosting Iran's matches if FIFA agrees.

Meenakshi stuns Antim at Asian C'ships trials



Meenakshi after defeating Antim. PTI

WRESTLING

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two-time World Championships medalist Antim Panghal suffered a shock defeat to Meenakshi at the selection trials and eventual exclusion from the side for the Asian Wrestling Championships at the Indira Gandhi indoor stadium here on Tuesday.

Antim, who has virtually dominated the 53kg for the past couple of years, was pinned by Meenakshi in the final of the trials after breezing through the opening rounds without dropping a point, as did her opponent. But the 25-year-old Meenakshi was confident, playing to her strengths and not allowing Antim to attack. The two were tied 2-2 in the first period before Meenakshi managed a couple of takedowns to race ahead 6-2. With seconds left, she pushed Antim's shoulders to the mat to win by Fall.

In the 76kg final, Kajal Dhochak continued her impressive form from the Pro Wrestling League to beat favourite Priya Malik 4-2.

Other categories, meanwhile, went as per expectations with Manisha Bhanwala, defending champion in the 62kg, moving down two categories to win in 57kg, and Mansi Ahlawat (62kg) booking their respective berths.

In Lucknow, the men's trials were on more predictable lines except for Paris Olympics bronze medalist Aman Sehrawat participating and winning in the non-Olympic 61kg category, moving up from the 57kg. In his absence, Ankush took the top spot in the 57kg.

Meanwhile, four men and women each across categories have also been selected for the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, next month.

The squads: Men: Freestyle: Ankush (57kg), Aman Sehrawat (61kg), Sujeet Kalkal (65kg), Abhimanyu (70kg), Jaideep (74kg), Sandeep Mann (79kg), Mukul Dahiya (86kg), Punit Kumar (92kg), Vicky (97kg), Dinesh Shankar (125kg).
Greco-Roman: Lalit (55kg), Sahil (60kg), Sunny (63kg), Sachin Sehrawat (67kg), Anil (72kg), Aman (77kg), Prince (82kg), Sunil Kumar (87kg), Nitesh (97kg), Joginder Rathi (130kg).
Women: Neelam Sirohi (50kg), Meenakshi (53kg), Hanshika Lamba (55kg), Manisha Bhanwala (57kg), Neha Sangwan (59kg), Mansi Ahlawat (62kg), Monika (65kg), Mansi Lather (68kg), Harshitha (72kg), Kajal Dhocjak (76kg).
ABG squad: Men: Siddharth (70kg), Amit (80kg), Aryan (90kg), Jaspooran Singh(90+kg).
Women: Priyanshi Prajapat (50kg), Pushpa Yadav (60kg), Jaspreet Kaur (70kg), Priya Malik (70+kg).

Vyasa wins the feature event

RACING

HYDERABAD: Trainer G. Sandeep's ward Vyasa, ridden by A. Ashad Asbar, won the Onnu Onnu Plate (Div. I), the main event of Tuesday's (Mar. 17) races.
The winner is owned by Mr. G.V. Reddy.

1. NARAYANPET PLATE (DIV. I) (1,100M): DILIGENCE (Kuldeep Singh Sr.) 1, Red Hot Punch (P Ajeeth K) 2, Fox Worth (P. Sai K) 3 and La Quinta (Suraj Narredu) 4. Not run: Marissa. 1-1/4, Head and 1. 1m, 05.93s. ₹36 (w), 14, 19 and 54 (p). SHP: 45, THP: 166, FP: 202, Q: 164, Tanala: 2,993. Favourite: La Quinta.
Owners: M/s. Cyrus S. Poonawalla & Adar C. Poonawalla rep. Villoo Poonawalla Racing & Breeding Pvt. Ltd. Trainer: Laxman Singh.

2. FLIRTING VISION PLATE (1,200M): N R I RANGE (Afroz Khan) 1, Knotty Senorita (P. Sai K) 2, Dream To Fly (G. Naresh) 3 and Smart Boy (B.R. Kumar) 4. 1, 6-1/2 and 2. 1m, 12.87s. ₹31 (w), 13, 18 and 16 (p). SHP: 39, THP: 42, FP: 118, Q: 55, Tanala: 233. Favourite: Knotty Senorita.
Owner: Mr. Ravinder Reddy Male. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

3. ONNU ONNU PLATE (DIV. I) (1,400M): VYASA (A. Ashad Asbar) 1, Lucky Zone (P. Ajeeth K) 2, Pacific Heights (Ajay K) 3 and Leather Back (Rafique Sk.) 4. 13-1/2, 1 and 3/4. 1m, 23.76s. ₹16 (w), 11, 20 and 31 (p). SHP: 58, THP: 47, FP: 101, Q: 98, Tanala: 1,019. Favourite: Vyasa.
Owner: Mr. G.V. Reddy. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

4. MOSSY BANK PLATE (1,400M): BHAIRAVA (P. Ajeeth K) 1, Rival (Suraj Narredu) 2, Clefairy (P. Sai K) 3 and Hoping Star (D.S. Deora) 4. Not run: Bholi Punjaban. Short Head, 3-1/4 and 7-1/2. 1m, 24.95s. ₹17 (w), 11, 13 and 18 (p). SHP: 38, THP: 41, FP: 41, Q: 27, Tanala: 82. Favourite: Bhairava.
Owner: Mr. T. Rakesh Reddy. Trainer: Ananth Vatsalya.

5. HYDERABAD PLATE (1,100M): KNOTTY CIRCUIT (P. Sai K) 1, Divine Star (P. Ajeeth K) 2, Fugo (Trevor) 3 and Anemara (B.R. Kumar) 4. 1-1/2, 2-1/2 and 1/2. 1m, 05.91s. ₹26 (w), 10, 11 and 14 (p). SHP: 46, THP: 32, FP: 113, Q: 69, Tanala: 249. Favourite: Knotty Circuit.
Owners: M/s. Krishnan Kamesh, K. Balamukunda Das, Manoj Krishnappa Kumar, Srikanth Badruka & Dharmesh Mehta. Trainer: A. Imran Khan.

6. ONNU ONNU PLATE (DIV. II) (1,400M): NORTHERN WAVES (Suraj Naredu) 1, Cherie Chevalier (Antony Raj) 2, Secret Saint (Trevor) 3 and Arabeska (Akshay K) 4. 1-1/4, 3-1/2 and 4. 1m, 24.47s. ₹17 (w), 10, 12 and 28 (p). SHP: 41, THP: 57, FP: 50, Q: 34, Tanala: 146. Favourite: Northern Waves.
Owner: Mr. V. Narender Reddy. Trainer: G. Shashikanth.

7. NARAYANPET PLATE (DIV. II) (1,100M): AUTHORITARIAN (Ajay Kumar) 1, Ek (Afroz K) 2, My Honey (Kuldeep Sr.) 3 and Catchme If You Can (D.S. Deora) 4. 2, 2-1/2 and 6-3/4. 1m 05.75s. ₹12 (w), 10, 22 and 27 (p). SHP: 34, THP: 57, FP: 59, Q: 44, Tanala: 227. Favourite: Authoritarian.
Owners: Mr. Cyrus F. Palia & Kunwar Digvijay Singh Shekhawat. Trainer: Laxman Singh.
Jackpot: 70%: ₹527 (882 tkts.), 30%: 129 (1,544 tkts.).
Mini Jackpot: (i) 657 (125 tkts.), (ii) 339 (307 tkts.).
Treble: (i) 134 (113 tkts.), 107 (386 tkts.).

Hockey WC: India and Pakistan men in same group

Sports Bureau

India is set to reignite its storied rivalry with Pakistan after both sides were drawn together in Pool D of the FIH men's Hockey World Cup 2026 during Tuesday's draw in Amsterdam. England and Wales complete the group.

In the women's section, India is in Pool D along with China, England, and South Africa.

Both the men's and women's tournaments will be jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands, from August 15 to 30.

The pools: Men: A: Netherlands, Argentina, New Zealand, Japan.
B: Belgium, Germany, France, Malaysia.
C: Australia, Spain, Ireland, South Africa.
D: England, India, Pakistan, Wales.
Women: A: Netherlands, Australia, Chile, Japan.
B: Argentina, Germany, USA, Scotland.
C: Belgium, Spain, New Zealand, Ireland. **D:** China, England, India, South Africa.

Indian Premier League and Polly Umrigar — let us celebrate both next week

BETWEEN WICKETS
Suresh Menon

Columnists are sometimes carried along by the rush of events, often feeling obliged to comment on the here-and-now. Thus, the progress from the build-up to the T20 World Cup to its unfolding to the final, to the post-mortem of the event. And when that's over, the IPL gets similar treatment. Occasionally, however, it is rewarding to look back rather than forward, and place today in the context of yesterday.

March 28, for example, is a significant date this year. It sees the start of the IPL. It is also the birth centenary of one of India's finest, Pahlan 'Polly' Umrigar. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when Indian batting still sought global respect, Umrigar was its most solid ambassador.

He was tall and composed. The crowd rarely gasped when he took guard. Yet by the time he finished, he had rewritten much of India's early batting history. Today, he would have been an IPL star too!

Known in the West Indies as 'Palm tree hitter', Umrigar was the bridge between origins and modernity. He played his first Test under independent India's first captain, Lala Amarnath, in a team with Indian cricket's early heroes: Vijay Hazare and Vinoo Mankad. His final Test came under Tiger Pataudi, who ushered in modernism.

For long Umrigar was India's most experienced Test cricketer, maker of most runs and centuries and the country's first Test double centurion. He cleared the path for champions Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli. Yet, it is a curse of sport that he is often remembered for one bad series in England.

In the fourth Test at Port of Spain in 1962, Umrigar claimed five for 107 in 56 overs, then made 56 and 172 not out after India followed on, and bowled 16 overs for 17 runs as the West Indies won. No one calls this 'Umrigar's Test' in the manner they did of the Lord's Test of 1952 when Mankad returned similar figures. Perhaps because those days only cricket writers from England could bestow such honours and none was present. India's K.N. Prabhu, however said it was "fit enough for verses and ballads."

Dismal Test series

This came a decade after Umrigar's bad series in England, where he had a highest score of 14 and was palpably uncomfortable against fast bowler Fred Trueman. It mattered what you did in England; their writers ensured that epithets stuck. Umrigar finished with 1688 runs on the trip with double-hundreds against Lancashire, Kent and Oxford. He made a century in Manchester on the next trip, but he couldn't get rid of the 'reputation' from 1952, although Trueman bowled on that later tour too.

The previous home season, his 130 had played a lead role in India's first-ever Test win, against England. Seven years later, when India beat Australia for the first time, Umrigar claimed four for 27 in the second innings (the hero of that match, Jasu Patel had 14 wickets), including the wickets of Neil Harvey and Norman O'Neill.

Indian players of the past tended to be pigeonholed by media descriptions that initially described them and later identified them. Such words were often out of use in regular conversation but survived on the sports pages of newspapers. Thus Lala Amarnath was the stormy petrel – every generation had to look up 'petrel' (it is, in fact, a sea bird that flew far from land). Umrigar was the 'bulwark' of Indian batting. I don't see that word too often these days; Rahul Dravid might have inherited it, but he was known by the simpler alternative: The Wall, a nickname he was not fond of.

"The early Umrigar," wrote Sujit Mukherjee, "indicated the lines along which contemporary batsmanship in India was going to develop....here was a workman whose craft had been fashioned in a polytechnic, not at home or in the privacy of a wicket behind a palace..."

He was too that other Indian rarity of his time – a safe catcher in the slips, possessor of what were sometimes known as 'bucket' hands.

As the game filled with stroke-players and television heroes, Umrigar's name began to sound almost old-fashioned, like a well-loved club pavilion. But cricket remembers such men kindly. Without them, the flamboyance of later generations would have had nothing sturdy to build on.

SNAPSHOTS

On top: Bhagirathi Group which won the KSCA Group II, Division II league.

Top stars for Indian Open squash

MUMBAI: The second edition of the JSW Indian Open will begin at the CCI Brabourne Stadium on Wednesday.
Recognised by the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and held under the aegis of the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI), the tournament will witness a strong mix of top Indian and international players. The focus will be on top seed and defending champion Anahat Singh. Joshna Chinappa, Ramit Tandon, Veer Chotrani and Abhay Singh are the other Indians who will look to make an impact. Among the international players, Yahya Elnawasnay, Nadien Elhammam and Enora Villard will be watched with interest.

Bhagirathi Group emerges champion

Bhagirathi Group defeated Infosys CC in the final to emerge as the KSCA Group II, Division II league champion in Bengaluru.

The scores: Bhagirathi Group 188/7 in 20 overs (S.J. Aadharsh 63, Aaron K Joseph 40) bt Infosys CC 152/9 in 20 overs (Pradyumna Srivatsa 58).

Massive win for RBI

Reserve Bank of India whipped Dhyanchand HC 9-0 in the KSHA 'B' division hockey league in Bengaluru on Tuesday.